

Muggle Marriage Law 51599

jaci93

Harry Potter

Complete



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Table of Contents

Cover
Title Page
Copyright Information
Table of Contents
Summary
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19
Chapter 20
Chapter 21
Chapter 22
Chapter 23
Chapter 24
Chapter 25
Chapter 26
Chapter 27
Chapter 28
Chapter 29
Chapter 30
Chapter 31
Chapter 32
Chapter 33
Chapter 34
Chapter 35
Chapter 36
Chapter 37
FIN

Summary

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Description:

Post Hogwarts/War. AU/AR, OC, OOC, non/dub-consent. The Ministry institutes a new Marriage Law. "Hermione, Draco is going to be wed," Mr. Weasley said. "Please tell me the reason that I'm here is because he wants me to cater his wedding," Hermione said.

Chapter 1

A.N. NOTHING NEW. Just forgot to add the disclaimer in the initial posting (stupid me).

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter, nor any of the characters from the books or movies. Ms. Rowling's is the brainchild behind them. I just have the honor of playing in that world.

8 Mar. Thurs. 1830 (6:30 p.m.) GMT

Hermione folded her arms over her chest. Why had Mr. Weasley ushered her to Malfoy Manor? She sat looking at shelves full of books behind the grand desk in Mr. Malfoy's den. Mr. Weasley looked through a stack of papers, cursing under his breath.

"Mr. Weasley, Sir," Hermione began as she turned to the haggard looking older wizard. "What was so important for which I postponed the end of my sabbatical from teaching?"

Mr. Weasley stopped looking through the papers before taking a big breath, "We are in changing times, Hermione. The war has ended."

"Yes," she nodded her head as she continued to look at him.

"The Wizarding World is trying to mend itself."

"I understand, Mr. Weasley," Hermione said slowly, "but, what does that have to do with me being called to Malfoy Manor?"

"The Malfoy Family is one of the most traditional families in the Wizarding World. You saw first hand the familial pressure Draco faced during your time at Hogwarts," Mr. Weasley said. Hermione rolled her eyes at the last sentence.

Mr. Weasley continued, "Mr. Malfoy received his inheritance after he married Mrs. Malfoy before his twenty-eighth birthday. Lucius's father went through the same thing.

"Hermione, Draco is going to be wed," Mr. Weasley said, looking sadly into her face.

"Please tell me the reason that I'm here is because he wants me to cater his wedding," Hermione said wide-eyed; not wanting to hear the far more bleak and realistic reason that Mr. Weasley was going to share with her.

"I'm . . . sorry, Hermione," he said looking forlorn. "With the institution of the new Muggle Marriage Laws, there isn't actually anything we can do differently."

Hermione blinked back tears. She stood up and paced in front of the desk. The whole room seemed to be spinning. "Why me?" she said aloud.

"My sentiments exactly," a cold voice sounded.

She turned towards the door. She narrowed her eyes at the younger, blonde haired wizard that entered. Draco Malfoy entered with his father, Lucius, and mother, Narcissa. The older

witch gave Hermione a gentle smile, which Hermione felt compelled to return. Hermione took in a deep breath to hear what she was getting into.

Chapter 2

A.N. Draco is a real butt in this chapter.

Cap wedding night

15 Mar. Thurs. 2345 (11:45 p.m.) GMT

Hermione took her time changing into the dark emerald green negligee that Draco's house elf, Blorg laid out on the large king sized bed. She looked at herself in the mirror in the large bathroom and sighed. She wondered just what she had done to deserve this.

She replayed the events of the very long week that had occurred: from Mr. Weasley informing her that she was to marry Draco Malfoy to the rather small and quick wedding ceremony the short bespectacled Ministry official performed on the patio of the immense backyard at Malfoy Manor only a couple of hours ago. The Laws stated that the Muggle party had to give up his or her wand until the marriage was sealed. Hermione almost seethed with rage. She also knew she had no choice.

Hermione shuddered as she saw herself in the rather short and skimpy negligee. The thin satiny fabric felt light against her skin as if she had nothing on. 'Why even bother to wear this?' she thought. She looked at her wristwatch; it read a quarter of twelve. She looked at the door to the bathroom and gulped. Was he waiting opposite that door for her? Or was he even in the room? Was he out with his buddies or better yet another witch? 'I should be so lucky,' she thought to herself as she reached for the door.

* * *

She took a step out of the bathroom. She took in a breath as she felt his presence right behind her. She quickly turned around, taking in another breath as she saw him.

His pajama bottoms matched the dark emerald green of her negligee. A thin silver rope chain hung against his bare chest. He held his wand loosely in his right hand.

He was tall, a good eight inches taller than her own 5'8 "frame. His Quidditch years toned his physique. So, this is what the girls were so ga-ga for all those years.

He canted his right eyebrow up as he caught her staring at him. She took in a sharp breath and tried to avert his eyesight. She self-consciously picked at the hem of the negligee that hung thigh high.

Draco slowly started to walk around her, eying her up and down. Hermione stood rooted to her spot, progressively taking on deeper shades of crimson. He ran the tip of his wand over the small of her back, grazing over the satin cloth. She couldn't stop the shiver that ran down her body.

"Hmmm," he said as he stood in front of her. He placed the tip of his wand under her chin and raised it, forcing her to look up.

“So this is what you were hiding under those robes all those years at Hogwarts,” he said as he ran the tip of his wand down her front, grazing the satin sleepwear. She took in another sharp breath. “Maybe I should’ve paid you a bit more attention, hmm?”

She narrowed her eyes at him. She self-consciously crossed her arms over her chest.

“Don’t cover up, Granger,” he drawled, taking a step backward, slightly pointing his wand at her.

She started to lower her arms and then realized what she was doing. She pulled her arms back over her chest as she took a deep breath. “I don’t have to take orders from you,” she said, flushed.

She flinched as she saw the telltale smirk cross his face. He took a seat on the bed. He looked her up and down again.

“Au contraire, my dear wife,” he said the last word quite icily. Hermione bristled as he called her that. Draco pointed his wand at her. She took in a breath. “Take off your clothes.”

“In your dreams, Malfoy,” she said almost as icily. She took another deep breath. “I’m not your puppet.”

She made a turn for the bathroom. She stopped in her tracks as he spoke.

“I’m sure you’ll recall Moody’s lecture in Fourth Year,” he began, as she turned to face him again. “Albeit the imposter, he did put out the correct information on Unforgivable Curses.”

She gasped. She looked straight into his silver grey eyes. “You wouldn’t.”

“Do as I say and I won’t have to resort to using the *Imperius*,” he smirked again.

“Go to hell, Malfoy,” she said in a measured tone.

He narrowed his eyes at her pointing his wand and sneered, “*Imperio*.”

He held his wand nonchalantly as he eyed her. “See, you are my puppet, Granger. Take off your negligee,” he smirked.

Hermione tried hard to stop herself from complying, but she knew better. She averted his eye contact, not wanting to see the amused look on his face at her predicament.

“Look at me,” he whispered softly as she let the green satin pool at her feet. “And the rest of it,” he said canting his eyebrow.

She took a deep breath. She could feel she was flushing as she pulled her knickers down to the floor. She self-consciously pulled her left arm over her breasts.

“I said not to cover yourself, Granger,” he said as he stood. She dropped her arms to her sides. He unconsciously licked his lips as he looked at her body, which caused her to turn redder.

“Kneel before me,” he said pointing at his feet. Hermione’s eyes grew large. Draco just smirked as Hermione fought herself every centimeter of the way before reaching him. She

shut her eyes as she took a deep breath. She knelt before him. She gulped. She looked up into harsh grey eyes.

He looked down at her. His eyes were menacing. "Remove my pajamas," he said with an air of arrogance.

She looked shock. "What?"

"Remove my pants," he said looking down at her in disdain.

Her hands flashed to the waistband of Draco's bottoms. Her hands trembled. He looked down at her amused. She looked up at him.

It was Draco's turn to take in a breath. He was not unaffected by the way she looked, naked, on the floor in front of him. He almost doubled over as he tried to adjust himself. His concentration on the spell broke.

Her hands fell quickly to the floor. She was breathing hard. "No," she said and then looking up at him, she cried louder. "No!"

He quickly recovered. His face turned cold. He aimed his wand at her again, the second Unforgivable Curse, "*Crucio*!"

She doubled over in agony. She slammed herself onto the wooden floor, her back aching in pain, her head lolled. She gritted her teeth to keep from screaming. She arched her back in pain. She cried out as tears flowed from her eyes.

Draco touched her face. She looked up at him wide eyed, the pain still coursing. "Beg for it to end, Granger."

She looked at him as he waved his wand again, doubling the strength of the *Cruciatus* curse. She writhed, her body twisting. She felt like her body was being torn in half. She looked up at him. Draco was a little disarmed for a moment. "Please, Draco, please stop it," she asked softly.

Draco breathed in as he watched her shiver, "*Finite incantatem*."

She gasped for air. Why was he allowing her to affect him so much? "Get up," he said, the tip of his wand only inches from her face. She looked up at him, coughing for air. She turned on her side, trying to get up. She got to her knees, still breathing deeply.

Draco yanked her up by her hair and threw her onto the bed. Hermione closed her eyes as she lay on the silk sheets. The softness under her contrasted with the hard wooden floor and for the moment she forgot her predicament.

She felt the bed dip as he crawled onto it. He straddled one of her legs. She looked up at him. "When had he removed his pants?" she thought as she shut her eyes.

"Don't shut your eyes on me," he said in a cold tone as he slowly ran the tip of his wand from the base of her neck down the center of her breasts and her sternum. She whimpered.

He breathed deeply taking in the sight of her underneath him. He moved a strand of hair out of her eyes as she looked up at him.

“You’re actually very easy on the eyes, Granger,” he said as he touched her face gently. “Not bad, for a Mudblood.”

She hit him square in the face, just like when they were in their third year at Hogwarts. He was in a bit of a shock at first, but recovered. He pointed his wand at her. She braced herself.

She felt her arms push over her head and then leather bindings wrapped tightly around her wrists. She tugged on them trying to free herself.

“You stupid bitch!” he said measuredly. “You filthy little witch. You Mudbloods infiltrate our communities, our work places and of course our schools. Your kind has destroyed the integrity of our Wizarding world.

“A Mudblood like you should have been drowned at birth,” he said venomously as he pointed his wand at her face.

“Do it,” she said looking up into his grey eyes as she stopped trying to wriggle herself from the binds. His wand hand wavered for a moment. “You’ve wanted me dead since we were eleven. All you have to say is two little words, Draco. I’m sure you were adept at using the killing curse during the war.

“This is your chance,” she gulped, unsuccessfully blinking back tears. “You can kill the Mudblood.”

His grey eyes darkened. The silence was deafening. He narrowed his eyes at her. He finally spoke. “And get arrested for killing my wife?” He pushed the tip of his wand a bit too hard under the soft part of her chin forcing her to look up at him. She gulped. He whispered harshly, “And allow you the satisfaction of seeing me thrown into Azkaban!”

“You can say it was self defense,” she said shutting her eyes waiting for the curse.

“I doubt marriage to a Mudblood would serve as a good defense with the Ministry,” he sneered.

“You know nothing of marriage,” she said looking up into his eyes as a tear ran down the side of her face. “Marriage is supposed to be a sacred union between two people who love and respect each other.”

“Like that of your parents?” he said coldly.

“You’re an asshole, Malfoy,” she said softly, turning her head away from him as the tears rolled down her cheeks.

He turned her to face him. “I could never fall in love with a Mudblood like you. The day I profess my love and respect for you is the day I would gladly give up magic.

“You’re of no worth to me. You filthy little Mudblood,” he said palming her right breast. He watched her exhale through pursed lips as she again struggled with the bindings that were tight around her wrists. “You’re just a fucking hole into which I can stick my Pureblood self.

“So let’s get this fucken night over with,” he said as she pulled at her restraints. Her wrists hurt as the bands cut into her skin. “So I don’t have to touch you again.”

“Fuck you,” she spat into his face.

"I'll have you writhing under me in a minute," he said wiping his face before placing his wand on his nightstand. He pulled her hair. "So tell me. Which one of your buddies did you like having in you more?"

Hermione's eyes enlarged. Her breathing quickened and her skin began to flush.

"Was it scar head Potter?" he said as he narrowed his eyes at her. He let go of her hair. He pulled her thighs apart. She took in sharp breath. "Or was it the redhead Weasel?"

He looked straight into her eyes; tears flowed slightly. She tried to blink them away.

"Or was it the foreigner's tongue that pleased you, huh? Was it the Bulgarian Krum?" he asked paying no attention to her tears. He ran his hand down her midsection. Her breath caught in her throat.

"By the end of tonight, the answer to that question will be me," he said.

"Draco, wait," she pleaded.

He ignored her as he thrust into her. She cried out. Draco was stunned for a moment. Then he narrowed his eyes at her again. He thrust deeper into her. She pulled at her restraints again.

"You're a virgin," he said as he saw the trail of blood flow down the inside of her thigh. She took another quick breath as she looked up at him before shutting her eyes.

He didn't know what came over him. The idea of being the one to deflower the Gryffindor Lioness was intoxicating. He grabbed his wand and released her binds.

He grabbed onto her wrists. She wailed in pain. He held her down as he thrust into her, disregarding her pleas for him to stop.

* * *

It was ten minutes to one when he finally collapsed on her, exhausted. He kissed her neck. She whimpered. He pushed up off her. He squeezed her chin forcing her to look at him.

"I own you," he said as he pulled out of her. She took in a choked breath. "You belong to me."

He lay next to her. She turned away from him, looking towards the balcony entrance, the moon light streaming in. She trembled. Her eyes fluttered.

"I belong to no one," she cried softly, "Least of all you."

He gritted his teeth. He ran his hand up the inside of her thigh, feeling the liquid substance; her blood and fluids mixed with his own semen. He fondled her for a moment until he heard a moan escape her lips. His hand coursed over her midsection leaving a trail of blood. He pulled her into his body.

"You're mine," he whispered into the back of her neck before allowing himself to succumb to sleep.

Chapter 3

The morning after

16 Mar. Fri. 0530 (5:30 a.m.) GMT

She blinked to get used to the low light in the room. Light from the moon filtered through the thin white curtain. Even during her days at Hogwarts, she was an early riser. The digital numbers on her wrist watch read 5:30 a.m. She moved slowly onto her back and clenched her jaw as the pain rushed up her spine.

She looked to her right and everything that happened the night before rushed back. She slowly got out of bed, making sure not to wake him. She made her way slowly to the bathroom and shut the door behind her.

The room automatically lit. Her eyes fluttered as she got used to the light. She looked down at her nude body. She gasped and had to hold onto the sink counter. She saw the dried blood trail that ran down the inside of her thigh and the hand print on her stomach. She took a deep breath. "Oh, God," she said to herself as she looked in the mirror, tears flowed.

She allowed herself a few extra minutes under the stream of hot water that almost worked like a deep muscle massage. Professor "Madeye" Moody had stressed that the effects of the *Cruciatus* were painful and lingering.

She shut the water off and breathed in. If last night was an indication of what life would be like with Draco, she wondered how she would survive. She quickly dried herself with a towel and wrapped it around her body. She pulled another towel and dried her hair as much as she could. If she had had her wand, she would have easily uttered a simple drying spell.

She placed the towel she had used to dry her hair into the hamper. She took a deep breath as she had caught a glimpse of the gold wedding band that Draco had placed on her left ring finger.

She had seen the hate in his stormy grey eyes as he placed the small cylindrical Muggle gold band on her. She had placed an identical gold band on his finger, only it was a wizarding piece. She remembered how he had pulled his hand from hers immediately after she had placed the ring on him as if he would have caught something contagious if he allowed her to touch him longer.

Hermione shook herself out of her daze. She tiptoed back into the room. For a second, she watched him sleep. He lay on his back. The silk sheet covered him up to the waist. She watched his chest rise and fall. He actually looked angelic asleep; handsomely angelic.

If things had been different, she would have probably considered herself lucky. Any witch, Pureblood, half blood, or Muggle-born would have salivated at the prospect of being in her position. But, that was just it, they were *different*, too different. She sighed quietly.

She picked out a pair of relaxed fit Levis blue jeans and a light blue V-neck t-shirt. If she had to be there, she may as well be comfortable.

She walked out into the hallway. She didn't remember the long walk down the hall as Mrs. Malfoy, or Mum as she had insisted Hermione call her, led her to Draco's room at the very end of the hall after dinner. They had left her new Father-in-law and Draco to talk.

Her new Mother-in-law pulled her into a hug. The older witch looked into large dark brown eyes that filled with trepidation. "Welcome to the family, Hermione," the witch had said as she gave her daughter-in-law another hug before leaving her alone to get used to her new surroundings.

Hermione walked down the hall slowly, studying the moving portraits and peeking into each of the rooms that she had bypassed the night before. The hall had reminded her of the halls at the school she had been teaching for the past three years before coming back into the war effort. The Manor, next to Hogwarts Castle was probably the largest residence in which she had stayed. For a moment, she actually felt sorry for the ferret boy. He had so much to have to choose from that it wasn't really his fault that he was such a brat.

She stopped in front a display case filled with Draco's Quidditch memorabilia. His Seventh Year seeker jersey hung in a glass case along side the award for being the best seeker that year. He had beaten out Harry Potter for the award. Probably by default, Hermione thought to herself, as she remembered Harry appeared as if he were sandbagging.

Draco was the key piece in the puzzle against Voldemort. The Order would have needed him as an ally somewhere down the line; eight long years down the line as the Dark Lord was defeated. Along the way, Ronald Weasley had died in the cause as did the boy-who-lived, Harry Potter. She was the only one of the "Golden Trio" to survive.

And what did the Wizarding World get to show for the victory? Muggle Marriage Law 51599 was drafted, ratified, and implemented as a means to "blur the bloodlines and to allow the World to mend itself."

She laughed. She looked up to the ceiling, 'This is some sick joke, right, Harry, Ron; just to get back at me for being a know-it-all, right.' She felt the tear fall onto her wedding band. She took a deep breath and wiped her cheeks.

She moved past Draco's Quidditch display and entered the door next to it. She took in a sharp breath. She pushed the door behind her, leaving it ajar. She took a deep breath, allowing the scent of the leather bindings to waft into her olfactory senses. It reminded her of the library at Hogwarts.

She ran her finger over the bindings of the books in the shelf next to the door. She smiled at the wizarding titles. She turned to look at the vastness of the library. High bay windows, blocked by drapes, lined the wall opposite the door. There were two couches facing each other perpendicular to a large desk. In front of the desk and in between the couches was a rather large round black plush rug with an emerald green dragon on it.

She moved to skim over the titles behind the large desk. She stopped for a moment, smirking just as Draco would have. Hogwarts textbooks filled four full rows. Transfiguration texts shared the same row as Care of Magical Creatures. She canted her head at the long row of Defense against the Dark Arts material. Arithmancy, one of her favorite subjects also had its own row. But what actually made her crack a smile was the row of Potions textbooks.

She pulled out *First Year Potions: an Introduction*. ‘He had kept all of these textbooks,’ she thought to herself as she thumbed through his book with handwritten notes on the sides. She ran her fingertip over his notes and then took a breath.

Many had thought that Professor Severus Snape was the biggest prat to have ever graced the halls of Hogwarts. Even Hermione thought he could be over-the-top sometimes. But for all the posturing, she truly respected the wizard. In fact, if there was anyone she could credit for her being a Chemistry teacher, it was he. Of course, she would never admit it out loud.

She sighed again as she replaced the familiar book into the shelf. She looked at another shelf full of wizarding fairy stories. She pulled one out and found her way to the plush rug. She gave the dragon another look. “You’re mocking me, aren’t you?” she asked the inanimate creature aloud before she lay down on him. She breathed in, closing her eyes. It felt nice underneath her. She cracked open the wizarding book and started to read about the poor young witch who had won the heart of the wealthy wizarding prince.

“Mrs. Malfoy,” the small elf came running into the library, as she was midway through the story. For a moment, she hadn’t realized the small creature was referring to her. She quickly sat up, placing the book gently on the floor.

“What is it, uh,” she looked directly at the elf.

“Blorg, ma’am,” the elf said hurriedly. He took hold of the witch’s hand. “Master Malfoy is about to pitch a fit if you don’t join them for breakfast.”

She got up. She looked at her watch, 8:00. She had been in the library for at least two hours.

“Blorg, I’m not really very hungry,” Hermione said as she followed the elf.

“Missus,” the house elf started, ignoring her cringe. “Mr. Lucius Malfoy will take it as an affront if you don’t show.”

“Okay, Blorg,” Hermione said as the little elf left her to trail after him. She shut her eyes. What would he do? Kill her at the table, torture her, curse her . . . humiliate her even further? She breathed in again and headed to the large dining hall she had eaten dinner in the previous night.

Chapter 4

Bookworm (april)

She had gotten an earful at her first breakfast at the Malfoy table. Mr. Malfoy went on about how important family meals were. Hermione nodded politely at the head of the Malfoy clan.

Mr. Malfoy already had his mind set against the young witch; it had been since he had had their first encounter in Flourish and Blotts before Draco's second year at Hogwarts. How could he allow his wife to talk him into sanctioning their son's marriage to this particular witch?

The first week was terrible for her. He had forced himself on her every night. She would wake up early as usual, always in pain.

Then their nighttime encounters were cut back to weekly sessions; more routine intercourse than lovemaking. Draco usually spent nights out with his Slytherin drinking buddies. She welcomed the break away from him.

She had settled into a routine. She would wake up way too early for his taste, 5:30 on the dot. Sometimes she would take in a long run around the estate before returning to shower; he would still be asleep. She'd shower and then get dressed and leave the room before he could even bat an eyelash.

She loved the gardens, the runs near the lakeside were breathtaking; the water lapping up on the shore, and along with the sun breaking the dawn on the water was beautiful. But there was one place that she had fallen in love with and it was to be her sanctuary at Malfoy Manor. She would spend hours in Draco's library, leafing through material.

She sat in the bay windows or on the couch. She would even make herself comfortable at his desk. But her favorite spot in the entire library undoubtedly was the large plush rug; where she would nestle herself with one of the thousands of books that the library housed.

O-O-O

20 Apr. Fri. 2230 (10:30 p.m.) BST

It was a Friday in late April. Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy had a function to attend. Draco had a scheduled dinner for the Ministry. Hermione had the whole manor to herself.

She retreated to the library. She ate one of the muggle chocolate bars she had packed as she walked carrying under her arm an old copy of her favorite muggle fairy tale. Fairly tattered through the years of leafing, her mother had given it to her when she turned ten. Before that, she had read it to her, in parts, as a bedtime story.

Draco usually liked her wearing the skimpy negligees to bed. She only wore them to appease him. Since he was probably going to stay out all night, she had slipped into her

muggle sleepwear. She put on one of her three pairs of Gryffindor gym clothes; a grey T-shirt with her House name across the front in maroon and goldenrod and a pair of dark red shorts.

She sighed as she settled herself on her stomach matting down the dragon under her. She propped herself on her elbows and cracked open the muggle paperback. She read to herself, "Once upon a time . . ."

O-O-O

She yawned and blinked her eyes. Had she fallen asleep? She tried to stretch but her arms seemed restrained in front of her. She focused her eyes on her wrists. She was somehow bound to the desk in front of her.

She tried to get up, but the most she could do was to kneel on all fours. She shivered. She was a little cold. She looked down at her chest. She breathed in, flushing.

"You're a true Gryffindor, aren't you, Granger," a voice drawled. She faced to her right. He smirked at her as he fingered his wand. Shirtless, he stood up, throwing her torn clothes on the couch that he had been sitting on. He walked slowly around her. He watched her struggle against the restraints. He placed his wand on the desktop.

"Untie me, Malfoy," she said breathing hard.

He positioned himself behind her, like a wrestler would before the referee would blow his whistle. He ran his fingers down her spine. He heard her take in a breath. He whispered into her ear, "Why would I want to do that?"

"Why are you doing this?" she asked, pulling at her restraints again. He had pulled his pajama bottoms off.

"I figured we'd spice up our routine," he said as he ran his hand over her breasts and down her mid section, eliciting a strained moan.

"I don't want this," she panted, confused at the way her body was reacting to his touch.

"You say one thing, but you're body seems to be telling me something different," he said as he ran his hand over her ass and then into her folds. She gasped and involuntarily pushed back against his thighs. He laughed. She colored.

He whispered loudly again, "Since we've already ascertained that the lioness was a virgin before I took her," he heard her take in another sharp breath, "it's safe to say that you've never taken it from the back."

She turned to look up at his face. A look of utter shock and denigration shown through her flushed cheeks. He smirked at her and without warning, he quickly pulled her legs apart and drove into her. She gasped. He reached around her and gently rubbed the small bundle of nerves. Her breath hitched in her chest as she felt the contrast of touches. He kissed her neck, his chest touching her back, the silver rope chain cold against her burning flesh.

He thrust slowly at first, allowing her to get used to the intrusion. He heard her moan. He sped up. He gripped the insides of her thighs and opened her up a little more as he pounded into her. His hands ran up and down her thighs. Her moans drove him over the top as she pushed back into him. His hands settled on her hips as she bucked.

They climaxed together. He lay on her back for a moment, breathing in the strawberry and vanilla scent of her hair. He turned her on her back, the restraints on her wrists twisting. She grimaced in pain. He watched her eyes flutter. His arms almost gave out on him. He knelt in between her knees.

“*Accio wand,*” he breathed, still looking at her, watching her chest rise and fall.

She looked up at him. He aimed his wand at her. She shuddered. Her arms settled onto the plush dragon. She took in a deep breath.

“Do you want to finish this in here or in our bedroom,” he asked breathlessly as he sucked on her right nipple.

She breathed in. Not at his gentle touch, but more so at what he had said. He had called it “our” not ‘my’ bedroom. She looked up at him, growing crimson. “Bedroom,” she said panting.

He smiled up at her. He gazed into her eyes as he held his wand. He touched her cheek. She grew redder.

“You don’t have to be ashamed, Granger,” he said, kissing her neck.

She blushed even more. She looked up at him questioningly.

“It’s okay to enjoy this,” he said pulling her up into his arms. “We are married, you know.” With that, he apparated them to their bedroom.

Chapter 5

Birthday watch (may)

They were civil with each other, for the most part when they were together, which was usually at dinner and a few breakfasts here and there, and one or two get togethers that were held at the manor. Draco usually left in the morning for his Ministry post as an inspector as part of the Crime Scene Investigation Unit. Hermione spent her days mulling around the manor until one day in late April, Mrs. Malfoy had asked her out to lunch to get to know her new daughter-in-law.

“Would you mind at all if we stop by St. Mungo’s, dear,” Mrs. Malfoy had asked the young witch as she took hold of her arm. Hermione shook her head.

Hermione waited near the entrance of the emergency room as she waited for Mrs. Malfoy. The older witch was head of the fundraising for the wizarding hospital. All of the events that she headed were successes. The biggest success was the annual St. Mungo’s Charity Ball. She had even volunteered Malfoy Manor for the last fifteen years since its inception as site for the fundraising event.

So as Hermione waited in the busy lobby, she watched as it was overrun by injured wizarding folk. She stood up and offered her help to the medical staff.

They had recognized her as the intelligent witch from Hogwarts. She had admitted to them that through the Muggle Marriage Laws, she did not have use of her wand. They accepted her help anyway.

Mrs. Malfoy watched from her vantage point in the hallway. She smiled to herself and headed back to her office where she returned to do more paperwork.

Volunteering at the hospital kept Hermione’s mind off things, especially Draco. She loved helping patients, especially in the children’s ward.

O-O-O

It was a Saturday in early May, one of the days that Hermione didn’t schedule herself to volunteer at the hospital. She had just finished her morning walk through one of the many gardens. The head gardener had told her that summer roses would soon bloom come June.

She entered their bedroom and paused at the door as Draco stopped packing his suitcase. He narrowed his eyes at her.

“Going somewhere?” she had asked sincerely as she leaned against the door jamb.

“I have to leave town for a little while; for the Canary Islands,” he chose his words wisely.

“On business,” she said it more as a statement rather than a question.

“Vacation actually,” he said and then added defensively. “We’ve been planning this for over a year.”

Hermione nodded her head, looking at him. “Who all is going?”

“Just some of us Slytherins,” he said looking at her. ‘Vincent, Blaise, Pansy,’ he paused, not mentioning that their significant others were also coming. “Corey and Celeste.”

Hermione nodded not able to look at him. She remembered all of them, especially Celeste. She remembered that she and Draco were an item at Hogwarts; in fact, they were *the* item since their fourth year.

“Shit, Granger,” Draco said annoyed, “I don’t need your permission.”

“Have a great trip, Draco,” she said, giving him a sincere smile. She left the room nonchalantly. Once she cleared the doorway, she took in a deep breath. Why did she let it bother her so? She surely wasn’t fishing for an invitation.

Draco watched her leave. He, himself, took a big breath. He threw his underwear into the bag. He had the urge to tell her off.

“Shit,” he said under his breath.

He stalked out of their room. He watched her duck into the library. His face softened. She always left the door slightly ajar. He walked in.

Hermione had shelved the Muggle fairy tale when she got so busy volunteering at the hospital. This was as good a time as any for her to continue with the story.

She had just opened up to the page where the creature went ballistic as he caught the young lady in the forbidden wing of the castle. Hermione got to the part when the creature yelled at her to get out when the blonde wizard entered. She looked up at him.

He bit his lower lip for a few seconds before he spoke. “It’s for my birthday,” he explained. She just looked up at him.

He shoved his hands into his pockets. He looked at her expecting some kind of response.

“Really, Draco,” she said sincerely, “I meant what I said back in the bedroom. I hope you have a great time.”

Draco narrowed his eyes at her. What was her catch?

“Everybody should spend his birthday with people he cares about,” she said softly. She returned to reading her book, hiding her eyes from him so that he wouldn’t see them brimming with moisture.

He was dumbfounded. He turned and walked out of the room.

O — O — O

That was their last conversation before he had left for the small little Spanish islands. Hermione kept herself busy volunteering at the hospital; keeping herself from imagining what sordid acts Draco and his former Slytherin housemates were performing.

Working at the Hospital, she had grown very close to and very fond of Draco’s mother. She respected the older witch. She wondered how such a wonderful person could have been related to Draco Malfoy. Obviously, Draco had taken after his father, she thought to herself.

Mrs. Malfoy had actually painted a different picture of her son. Not that she denied that he could be a git at times, but she did talk about what he was like before the Hogwarts eleven year old that Hermione remembered. She smiled.

Back at the manor, Hermione had fished the old muggle timepiece from her things. Her dad had given her his favorite watch as a college graduation gift. She dusted off the black and emerald green Rolex. She wound the watch. It ticked. She smiled at the beautiful keepsake.

She replaced it into the box. She wrapped it up with plain parchment paper. She tied a ribbon around it and rested it on his nightstand. Happy Birthday, Draco, Love Hermione, she had written. She looked at it again and had an inclination of crossing out "Love." She rolled her eyes.

She headed out of the manor for St. Mungo's. Draco would actually be home that afternoon, if she had heard the house elves correctly.

O-O-O

She had reached the manor in record time. It was nearing dinnertime and she was feeling anxious. She was actually looking forward to seeing him.

When they were halfway through dinner, Hermione actually felt quite empty. She had gone to bed wearing another Gryffindor top and bottom to bed. There she continued to read the muggle fairy tale before her sleepy eyelids betrayed her.

The creature held his paws over her eyelids. 'What exactly was he going to show me?' the young beauty thought to herself as she smiled.

O-O-O

15 May Tues. 2300 (11:00 p.m.) BST

'What was she smiling about?' he thought to himself as he removed his pajama bottoms. He crawled onto the bed. He had already dispensed of her shorts and was in the process of taking care of her shirt, using his wand to tear up the garment. He ran the tip of his wand down the center of her chest. Her eyes flashed open. Her smile that he observed earlier vanished.

She looked up at her wrists. She shut her eyes, beginning to turn red. She took in a breath as she felt him in between her thighs.

"Do you get your kicks doing this to me?" she breathed through pursed lips as he smirked at her.

"Is that the way to welcome home your husband?" Draco said placing his wand on his nightstand. He kept her gaze.

"I'm really tired, Draco," she said, her breath caught in her throat.

"It's only eleven," he said looking at his new wristwatch.

He ran his fingers down the center of her abdomen. She gulped. She pulled against her restraints again.

“You never learn, do you Granger?” Draco said kissing her neck. “This is a Slytherin household. Your maroon and gold taint it.”

“I just want to sleep,” she said not wanting to admit that she had been anxious to see him when he was scheduled to arrive earlier that day. Had he been out with his friends drinking? Or had he been with someone?

“Shhh,” he said gently into her ear. She gulped again.

He kissed down her center until he reached her navel. His soft blonde bangs brushed against her sensitized skin. He looked up into her face. She was already straining for breath.

“What are you doing?” she asked weakly, gazing into his eyes.

He just gave her a smirk. He pulled her legs farther apart.

“What do you think you’re doing?” she asked worried, as she again pulled on her restraints.

“Shh,” he said calmly as he laid a trail of kisses down from her left knee to the inside of her thigh. She breathed in.

Her eyes widened as he licked her slit. He stopped her from shutting her legs on him, he was far stronger than she was. He nibbled on her clit making her gasp.

“Oh, God,” she moaned as she yanked harder on her bindings, raising her pelvis into him. She blushed at what she had just done, ashamed he had caused her to act so brazenly.

His tongue darted in and out of her. He varied the pressure of his flicks keeping her off guard.

“Oh, God, please Draco,” she moaned.

He stopped his ministrations for a moment. He watched her squirm, her eyes fluttering.

“*Accio wand,*” he said breathlessly. She looked up at him, her breath hitched.

“*Finite Incantatum,*” he drawled. Her arms fell onto the silk sheets. Her chest rose and fell as she tried to normalize her breathing.

He caught her gaze again. She took in a sharp breath, disarmed at how gently he had looked at her. She gasped again as he continued where he left off.

He sucked causing a vacuum. She moaned, arching her back. She fisted the silk sheets at her sides, uttering soft moans.

“Draco, please, deeper,” she said as he felt her hands in his hair, pulling him into her further. He smiled to himself. If he had looked up at her, he would have noticed her face flushed crimson.

He deepened his plunges. She moaned in ecstasy moving her hands over the sheets again. He made her shudder three times in orgasm, her juices spilling out of her. He lapped her up. Her fingers no longer clutched at the sheets. She was spent.

He kissed his way up to her face. She felt his weight on her chest as she tried to breath. She looked up into his grey eyes.

He kissed her on her lips. The taste of herself was intoxicating. She audaciously grabbed the back of his neck, pulling him deeper into the kiss. He pulled at her wrists, pushing them into the mattress, but keeping the kiss.

When he finally pulled away from her lips to allow them to breathe, she looked up into his face, afraid of what she had done. He smiled at her, which disarmed her further.

She averted his eyes. She concentrated instead on his chest that was expanding and contracting as he breathed and the silver chain he always wore. He watched her turn crimson.

“Thank you,” he said turning her chin up. She looked questioningly up at him, “For the watch.”

She gulped. “Happy birthday, Draco,” she said softly.

He entered her, gently, waiting for her to tell him to stop. She never did. He kept her eye contact as he quickened his pace. She moved in time with him.

He pulled her into his chest and turned their positions around. He was now under her. She looked at him, looking lost. She had never been on top before, and she didn’t know how to proceed.

He smiled encouragingly at her. He gently pushed up on her breast so that she was in a sitting position. She gasped at the different sensation she was feeling. He massaged his fingers into her hip pushing her away and then pulling her back down. She moaned as she looked down at him. He palmed her breasts. She moaned louder.

He sat up. He looked into her anxious face. He embraced her, his fingers dancing on her back as he kissed her neck. He pulled her in closer to his body.

“Oh, Draco,” she said breathlessly.

He kissed her neck again and then looked up at her. She blushed. He smirked gently at her before turning her onto her back. He paused for a moment, looking into her eyes. He thrust into her as he clutched at the sheets. She moved her hands onto his ass, urging him to deepen the thrusts.

They moved together. She climaxed before he did. He thrust a couple more times before spilling into her.

He gazed into her eyes. They fluttered as she breathed slow breaths. He pulled out of her. Her breath hitched. She shuddered.

He lay down next to her. His eyes were droopy as well. He expected her to turn to the balcony, analyzing what they had just done. But instead, she turned on her side facing him. She looked up at him, already blushing.

She searched his eyes; trying to figure out what had just happened. He pushed a strand of hair away from her eyes.

“This doesn’t mean I love you, you know,” he said softly, searching her eyes, too.

She breathed in. She looked up at him. “I know,” she said softly.

He pulled her head and arms onto his chest. He kissed her forehead. She took in a deep breath. Her eyelids fluttered before she fell asleep.

O-O-O

The next morning she had found herself on him. She blushed. What happened last night? She quickly and quietly got out of bed, careful not to wake him.

She had to think. She put on the shorts that he had removed. She looked at the shirt he had torn off her. She sighed. She pulled a plain t-shirt out, slipped on some socks and her running shoes. She needed to clear her mind, and running afforded her that luxury.

‘He was probably drunk,’ she thought of how gently he had treated her, as she rounded the lake for her second lap. She shut her eyes. He had said at the end that he didn’t love her. Which was just as well, she thought. She went into an all out sprint toward the Manor. Nothing would come of last night, she convinced herself. He would surely make sure of that. She sighed as she slowed down to cool off. Give him a couple of days, he’ll return to his prat self.

14

Chapter 6

St mungos (June)

14 Jun. Thurs. 1000 (10:00 a.m.) BST

Things had returned to the norm. Draco returned to his sour self. He looked at her with scorn and made it a point to smirk at her when he was around her. Mr. Malfoy was his unbearable self. He had questioned her fertility, as if the reason a couple could not conceive was always the fault of the female.

She still volunteered at the hospital. With all of the Charity Ball preparations that the other hospital workers were busy with lately, she busied herself with entertaining the kids in the children's wing.

It was mid June. She took a deep breath as the scent of roses filtered through the air. She had just come from the garden and the head gardener elf had smiled at her. He expertly cut and pruned the thorns off the stems of three rosebuds; red, white and yellow. She thanked him as he bowed to her before he returned to his cleaning duties.

She smiled as she headed towards the library in their wing. She opened the door not expecting to find anyone within her sanctuary.

"Get out of here!" the young wizard said enraged as he watched his startled wife drop the contents that she had in her hands.

"I didn't know anyone would be in here," she said softly.

"Just get the fuck out! I'm working in here," he said narrowing his eyes at her.

"I'm sorry," she said weakly, leaving the library as quickly as possible.

Draco's companion watched the rage filled tirade of one of his best friends. He walked over to the door and shut it. He uttered a locking spell and picked up the three buds. He breathed deeply. He smiled.

He looked back up at his old Slytherin housemate. "You know, you were a bit hard on her, Draco," Gregory Goyle said as he brought the three flowers to the desktop, placing them in front of him.

"Look, Greg," he looked at his friend. "You're my attorney. I pay you good money. Let's just get this done okay."

His old friend smiled as he nodded his head. "Being married to a Muggle-born isn't all that bad," the young attorney said speaking from experience. He looked through the set of legal papers in front of him. "Are you sure you really want this?"

Draco studied his friend's face. He pulled the red rose up and breathed in, shutting his eyes in exasperation. Gregory just nodded.

O-O-O

Hermione sat with her legs folded under her as she turned the page of her Muggle fairy tale. She breathed in as she got to the part where the creature agreed to allow the young woman to tend to her ailing father.

“Hermione,” the older witch said as the young woman quickly stood up, placing her book on the dresser.

“Mum,” she smiled, “I was just catching up on some reading.”

“Good book?” the older witch smiled.

“My mum and dad used to read this story to me growing up,” Hermione said, looking down as she remembered her parents.

Mrs. Malfoy put her arm around her daughter-in-law’s shoulder. “Hey, let’s go into Diagon Alley for some shopping, dear.”

Hermione looked up at her new mother-in-law. “Mum, I wouldn’t know what to shop for.”

“Well, Hermione, we can buy you new dress robes for tonight,” she smiled.

Hermione feigned ignorance of the hospital’s function. “Dress robes for what, Mum?”

“Oh, dear, Hermione,” Narcissa placed her index finger under the young witch’s chin, raising the shorter woman’s head. “For the St. Mungo’s Charity Ball here tonight.”

“I don’t,” Hermione paused, turning slightly flushed, “I don’t think I’m going to attend tonight.”

“Nonsense, Hermione.”

“Mum, I,” Hermione looked down, “I wasn’t invited.”

“I’m inviting you,” her mother said.

“Mum, I really don’t,” Hermione began, but quickly stopped.

“You’ll be my guest,” her mother looked at her smiling, as she led the young witch out of the bedroom.

O-O-O

They found themselves in a quaint little boutique that catered to the elite yet patronized by the less affluent as well. She was trying on her third set of dress robes in Lavender Brown’s robe shop. The robes hung to her, highlighting her every curve. It was a deep emerald color made of the finest silk.

“I think that looks positively amazing on her. What do you think, Mrs. Malfoy?” Lavender asked.

“I think that color definitely suits you, dear,” Mrs. Malfoy cupped Hermione’s chin.

“We also have some imported Muggle fare if you would like to see them?” Lavender said as she moved towards the back of the shop. The two customers followed the shop owner to the very small section devoted to Muggle clothing.

Hermione hid a small smile. Lavender looked over the fine Muggle dresses in front of them and finally settled on one that was magnificent. A small smile even crept up on Mrs. Malfoy's face.

"Here," Lavender said placing the dress into Hermione's hands. She pointed to a small changing room. "You can change in there."

O-O-O

Hermione walked out of the changing room and held her breath. Mrs. Malfoy's breath caught in her throat as her eyes grew wide, "Wow, Hermione."

"You look beautiful, Hermione," Lavender said breathlessly. "The deep red brings out the color of your eyes and highlights your dark brown hair. Don't you agree, Mrs. Malfoy?"

"I certainly do," Mrs. Malfoy said as she walked around the younger witch. "I think you should wear that one tonight. Lavender, we'll take all four garments."

"Wait, Mum," Hermione said, grabbing a hold of her mother-in-law's hand. "I . . . don't need all four, Mum. I can't . . ."

"Hermione, my treat," she said as she squeezed the younger witch's hand.

"I can't accept . . ."

"Hermione," the older witch interrupted, "I never had daughters. I've raised a son. And I don't think Draco would look particularly good in a dress. It would probably give him a complex."

The three women laughed. "Allow me to do this old eccentric motherly thing, hmm," Mrs. Malfoy said as she nodded for Hermione to change out of the dress.

O-O-O

Hermione felt the excitement in the air. She had never actually gone to any of the previous St. Mungo's Charity Balls that Mrs. Malfoy had hosted. It may have been the fact that it was always held here at Malfoy Manor and that she and Draco were enemies since they had first met. She smiled at the irony of her situation.

It was an hour before all of the dinner guests would show. She found herself entering the kitchen. She watched as the kitchen elves moved this way and that finishing last minute preparations to the fifteen hundred dinners they were preparing.

"Hey Krank," she said stepping towards the head chef elf who looked a little haggard.

The small elf turned toward the young witch. His face quickly brightened. "What can we do you for, Mrs. Malfoy?"

Hermione smiled in spite of herself. "You seem a bit vexed, Krank. Is there anything I can do to help?"

Krank's eyes grew larger. No wizard or witch had ever offered to help out in the kitchen before, much less any of Master Draco's women.

It was true that the kitchen crew was shorthanded that night. Five of the sous chefs were sent to their quarters sick.

“Mrs. Malfoy,” Krank began.

“Krank, please,” the young witch stopped the head chef. “Call me Hermione. And I don’t mind helping out.”

Krank looked at her thoughtfully. He took in a breath, “Five of our cooks are out sick. Several of them were in charge of the soup course. We’ve got less than an hour to prepare the introductory course and I’m shorthanded.”

“Then it’s settled. Where are your aprons?” she said smiling.

“Ms. Hermione,” Krank began. “Hmm. Follow me.”

O-O-O

“There,” Hermione said as she stirred the concoction one last time before ladling some into several small ramekins for taste testing. Several of the sous chefs and Krank joined her in the tasting. All of them nodded approval. The sous chefs ladled themselves a second helping as Krank looked at Hermione grinning.

“That’s a winner, Missus,” Krank said. He turned to the others who were slurping up the last of their servings. “Okay, guys, save some for the guests.”

Hermione smiled to herself as she watched Krank and another chef elf start to ladle the first set of servings into bowls. She pulled off her apron and headed towards the back entrance of the kitchen. She bounded up the back stairs, the servant’s entrance to Draco’s wing.

She was running late. The guests would be there in another ten minutes. She still had to shower and get dressed.

O-O-O

14 Jun. Thurs. 1935 (7:35 p.m.) BST

She took in a deep breath and dusted herself off unnecessarily as she stood in the foyer outside of the Manor’s ballroom. She gulped as she saw her reflection in the glass of one of the trophy cases. The dark red backless calf-length garment accentuated her curves. She shut her eyes. ‘Just go back upstairs and forget about tonight,’ she thought to herself as she moved back towards the staircase.

She took another breath as she turned again to the ballroom. “You’ve never backed down from anything in your entire life, Hermione,” she told herself. She gulped again before holding her chin up as she made her way to the ballroom.

“Why start now?” she said under her breath as she entered the full ballroom.

It seemed as if everybody stopped eating to look at the new arrival. Hermione took another deep breath as she felt eyes on her. She moved gracefully in her three inch high heels that matched the color of her Muggle dress perfectly. The thigh high slit on her right side exposed some of her leg as she walked towards her Mother-in-law who was waving for her to come to

the head table where Mr. Malfoy, Draco, Dean Thomas, Ginny Weasley, Corey Reimers, and Celeste Profesi sat.

Dean, who sat in between Draco and Ginny, stood up to offer his seat to her. Hermione smiled, shook her head and nodded towards the empty seat in between Corey Reimers and Mr. Malfoy.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mum," she said as she kissed her mother-in-law in greeting.

"It's fine, Hermione," Mrs. Malfoy smiled and pointed to her seat. "You missed a most delectable soup course."

Hermione smiled and then nodded to the other guests at the table before taking her seat. Draco's breath hitched in his throat. He watched her smile beguilingly at his old housemate. He took a sip from his wine glass, as he could feel himself starting to color.

"It's nice to see you again, Corey," Hermione said politely to the former Slytherin. Corey looked her up and down, nodded at her politely and then returned her smile quite coyly.

She turned to face Draco. She took a deep breath as she tried not to notice Celeste stroking Draco's backside. She smiled just as politely towards Draco. Draco nodded at her. She turned her attention back to Corey who seemed quite amused at Draco's reaction which he caught out of the corner of his eye.

O-O-O

The rest of the evening was like all the balls Hermione read about in her Muggle fairy tales. Wizards and witches from all over England congregated to help the cause. The food was amazing; Krank's crew really outdid themselves.

Dinner gave way to dancing. Dean Thomas was the first to ask his fellow Gryffindor to dance. Dean bowed to his old housemate. She smiled. She placed her hand in his and he nodded to her. They both laughed.

"You look beautiful, Hermione," Dean said as he turned her on the dance floor.

"You don't look too shabby, yourself, Dean," she smiled back at him.

"You think she noticed?" the tall young half blood asked, hopeful.

"Just ask her to dance, already," Hermione said smiling at her old friend.

"I don't want Ginny to think I was pressing," Dean said.

"Dean, you're sweating," Hermione said, as she wiped his brow with her fingertips. "Now go ask her or she'll think we've got something going on."

"You're right. Besides, I wouldn't want Draco going postal on me at work for flirting with his wife," he smiled at his Muggle humor.

Hermione playfully punched him in the upper arm. She nodded. Dean bid her thanks and left to find the ginger haired only daughter of the Weasley clan.

The dance floor filled up with the younger crowd. Draco watched as wizard after wizard had cut in to dance with his wife. His face, usually quite unreadable, looked amazingly, as if

he wanted to kill somebody. His ears were burning as he watched one of the young wizards dare to allow his hand to stray past Hermione's lower back.

Before Draco could move to curse the culprit, Hermione had diplomatically pulled his arm above Draco's "safe zone." Hermione smiled at the young man signaling for him not to do that again if he wanted to keep his fingers.

Draco watched the Slytherin their age smile at the young witch. He watched her hesitate before taking his hand again. Corey brought the witch's body into his. Draco clenched his teeth before taking a breath. 'Why should I care?' he asked himself.

O-O-O

"So Ms. Granger," he said pulling her into his body quite tightly, "or shall I call you Mrs. Malfoy?"

She had to take in a deep breath. He had held her so close that his chest pressed against hers. She looked up into the tall Slytherin's hazel eyes. He wasn't as tall as Draco. She had a feeling this dance wasn't going to be very cordial. She actually hoped Draco would cut in at that moment.

"Hermione is fine, Corey," she said taking light breaths, keeping her tone as neutral as possible.

He narrowed his eyes at her. "If it had been put up to a vote, I doubt you and Draco would have been the couple most likely to get married," he said into her neck.

O-O-O

The platinum blonde Slytherin ran his fingers through his hair as he gritted his teeth, watching the couple look at each other. He clenched his fist but relaxed as he felt a hand run down the length of his back. He turned and smiled at the blonde witch.

He took her hand and led her to the dance floor. He nodded at his former lover, one with whom he had had relations up until three months of his wedding.

He had missed the fashion model. They had been Hogwarts sweethearts, the pair most likely to end up together, he thought with a smile. He closed his eyes, shutting out his predicament. He thought of life with Celeste Profesi, what should have been, as the music played.

O-O-O

Hermione looked at her old classmate. She took in a breath. "'Life will throw you a curve ball once in a while,' my father used to say," Hermione said as she tried to nonchalantly force her dance partner to loosen his grip.

"Interesting Muggle saying," he said into her ear. "You must be enjoying yourself as Draco's new conquest."

Hermione's breath hitched in her chest. Reimers raised his eyebrows, "Are you that good in bed? Is that why he hasn't come up with a way to get rid of you?" he said brushing her cheek with his finger.

“These are not questions,” she said gulping, “that any self respecting woman would answer.”

He eyed her as he turned her on the dance floor. He pulled her in close to his body again. “You’re a Mudblood, Granger. Always will be. No matter how much you ingratiate yourself with the Malfoy clan.

“How many of those wizards would you bet would pay Draco a chance to fuck you senseless?” he said nodding at the wizarding crowd on the dance floor.

Hermione stopped dancing. Her eyes began to water as his words rang in her ears. She took a breath. “Thank you for the dance, Mr. Reimers,” she made a move to leave.

Corey tightened his grip more. She winced. “Do you honestly think Draco is with you because he loves you? Did you actually believe he’d be true to this marriage, to a Mudblood? How many other witches do you think he’s been with since you two tied the knot, hmm?

“Frankly, I highly doubt he’d mind if I had a turn on you tonight,” Corey smirked, “Because you’re nothing more than a cunt.”

Hermione shut her eyes. With what little wiggle room she had in the dress, she was able to pull her knee up into his groin just as the music had died down. Applause infiltrated the ballroom as Mrs. Malfoy stood at the podium.

Corey breathed in deeply. He lost track of the brown haired witch. He huffed under his breath.

Draco himself lost track of his new wife. He would definitely take it up with her later that night, he told himself as he nodded at his dance partner. He took a glimpse in the direction of Corey Reimers and smirked.

16

A.N. Thanks for all the support and reviews so far. Just to answer some burning questions. Draco isn’t cheating on Hermione. He’s part of a family that is awfully traditional . . . so as much as he would want to he feels compelled not to. Let’s just say he feels frustrated.

Chapter 7

A.N. Warning: Draco has to be a shite before we can actually see the arc of his character; to be able to like him at the end.

She waited until the safety of their bedroom to allow her tear ducts to flood. She stood for a moment in front of the bed as the tears ran down her face. She blinked rapidly.

She removed her shoes and headed for the balcony. She needed to get some fresh air. She looked up into the clear night sky. She breathed, trying to calm herself down.

She didn't know why she allowed Reimers' words to affect her so. It wasn't as if she ever took the former Slytherin seriously, especially not at Hogwarts. He was like most of the Slytherins, stupid arses. Reimers was a jerk.

But what she realized was that this jerk was in Draco's close circle of friends. He would be one of his confidants. It was the realization that no matter what she did, she would never fit into Draco's world. They were too different. She had known that from the first moment he had looked down at her and smirked when they were eleven. She would always be that outsider looking in.

She had been out on the balcony for a good hour. She could still hear the music from downstairs. She shivered in the night air. She looked over the railing. It was a good sixty feet off the ground. She sighed. She'd probably just hurt herself badly.

"Mum, I don't know how I'm going to get through this," she said looking up into the heavens. She missed her talks with the older woman. She shut her eyes for a moment. She breathed in again.

'You should have just stayed in tonight, Hermione,' she thought to herself. She wiped her cheeks with her palms. She looked upwards again before deciding to go to bed.

She walked into the room, breathing deeply. She didn't see it coming. The hand muffled her scream. She struggled. Was it Corey making good on his threat? The hand finally lifted.

"Corey, wait," she pleaded before turning around.

"Reimers?" the tall blonde haired grey-eyed wizard said icily as he narrowed his eyes at her.

He had entered the room moments earlier. He had had way too much to drink that night. Even he had to admit to that. He removed his shirt, socks and shoes, and sat on the small bench next to the bathroom, wriggling his toes to relax. What the hell happened that night?

He saw the figure walk through the curtains. He stood up quietly.

She was actually relieved that it was him. She breathed a momentary sigh of relief. His eyes turned stormy.

He grabbed for her neck and threw her into the bookshelf. She fell to the ground bringing several books with her. She felt her head. She saw the crimson from the cut. She gulped.

He kicked her in her sternum. She clutched at her midsection taking in small quick breaths. She turned on her back.

He uttered the torture curse three times. She trembled as the last one ceased. Her right shoulder felt like it was about to fall off. She could feel her eyes roll into the back of her head. But before she could go unconscious he pulled her up by her shoulder, she wailed in pain.

He pushed her again into the bookshelf. He held her by the neck and rammed her against the wooden shelf. He pointed his wand at her face. She looked up at him, her eyes pleading for an explanation.

“How dare you!” he said narrowing her eyes at her. “How dare you walk into that ballroom as if it were second nature to look like you did! Who were you trying to impress, Granger?!”

“No one,” she cried.

“How dare you get all those wizards to notice you like that! Did you like their hands all over you?!” he said tightening his grip on her neck.

“We were just dancing, Draco,” she said almost inaudibly, choking on her breaths.

“You slut!” he said pulling her away from the shelf. He shook his head, trying to clear the effects of the glasses of liquor he had consumed that evening.

“Please, Draco, please,” she began looking into his eyes. She had placed her palms on his chest for balance. “Please think about what you’re doing. The alcohol. Please don’t do anything you’ll regret.”

He smirked at her. In a measured and icy tone, he said through gritted teeth, “How dare you wear your house colors to my bed.”

With that, he tore her dress off her shoulders and yanked it down. It pooled at her feet. She gulped as he pointed the wand at her chest.

“I should have killed you that first night,” he said icily, his eyes fluttering, slightly.

She shut her eyes, tears spilling down her cheeks. She pulled the tip of the wand into her chest. She felt the wooden stick touch her skin. “Here’s your second chance,” she said softly, looking into his eyes. Her eyes fluttered as her knees buckled. She fell into his chest.

He pushed her off onto the bed. She felt the soft sheets under her naked body. She breathed in deeply. ‘What was he going to do to her?’ she thought to herself.

He tore her knickers off her and pulled her legs apart. He gripped her wrists with his hands as he looked into her eyes.

“Were you planning a rendezvous with Reimers?” he shouted at her as he palmed her breast.

“No, Draco,” she cried.

“Don’t lie to me, Granger!” he said forcing her to look into his face. He held her chin. She trembled. He let up on his grip. “Were you waiting up here for all of them to take turns on you?”

“No,” she cried again.

“You fucken whore!” he said as he forced her thighs open. He rammed his shaft into her. Her breath caught in her throat. He repeatedly thrust into her, not even caring about how much he was hurting her at that moment. She endured the onslaught, too weak to fight back.

“I don’t know what I did wrong, please,” Hermione finally begged softly.

“You lived,” he said as he looked straight at her as he thrust into her. He wanted to make her pay for everything; how she had bested him at Hogwarts in just about anything that didn’t involve a broom. He watched as fresh tears rolled down her cheeks. She had shut her eyes on him and he was disarmed for a moment.

He squeezed her chin. “Don’t shut your eyes on me,” he breathed in hard. Her eyes fluttered. He blinked wildly, trying to clear the dizziness.

She looked up at him. She felt him near his climax, he spilt his seed into her before collapsing on her. Her breathing was labored under him.

She gulped, “Why me?” she asked softly, her eyes half closed. He looked at her wondering what she was going on about. She looked at him again, “Why did you choose me?”

“I didn’t choose you,” he said, narrowing his eyes at her. “Mother did.”

Hermione stifled a sob. She turned her head, not wanting to look at him.

“So what else have you to say for yourself?” he said, a little slurred as the effects of alcohol were finally getting to him. He shook his head as he pulled out of her.

Her breath hitched as he loosened his grip on her wrists. She stifled another sob. She looked up into his eyes. Her lower lip trembled for a moment. His eyes softened as he watched her breathe.

“You were right,” she said in a small voice. “I *am* worthless. I’m just a filthy Mudblood hole that you can stick yourself into, Draco.”

“I mean nothing to you,” she said shutting her eyes. He moved off her and lay next to her. He watched her turn on her side facing the balcony. He could tell she was crying silent tears by the way her back shook.

He gently draped his arm over her hip. To his surprise, she grasped his hand, interlacing her fingers with his. She pulled his hand up under her chin. He felt the moisture from her tears.

He took in a breath and then exhaled softly. He gently kissed her shoulder. “You’re mine,” he whispered.

Her eyes fluttered for a moment. “I’m yours,” she said squeezing gently on Draco’s hand. Draco pulled her in closer to his body. He could feel her breathe against his chest. His eyes also began to droop before he finally joined her in sleep.

Chapter 8

15 Jun. Fri. 0805 (8:05 a.m.) BST

He stirred as he heard the chirping of birds outside. He breathed deeply, another morning, he thought. He turned towards the open balcony doorway. He was surprised to see her still there.

He watched her as she stirred a little. He peered at the Muggle wristwatch that she had given him for his birthday. It was five minutes past eight. She was always up and out of bed by the time that he woke up for work.

“You’re letting yourself go, Granger,” he muttered under his breath as he pushed the covers off himself. He pulled his boxers on and turned back to her.

His breath caught in his throat for a moment. Pushing the covers off himself exposed her right shoulder and backside. He had a glimpse of his handiwork. She stirred again and lay on her back. She turned her cheek slightly. This time Draco couldn’t keep from gasping. The hair around her right temple was matted. The blood from a laceration on her head had dried.

He picked up his wand. His hand shaking slightly, he whispered the cleaning spell, *Scourgify* and a simple yet effective healing spell. The blood and bruises disappeared. She stirred a little. She turned back on her side.

He looked up to the ceiling before heading to the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. He turned the water on and splashed some water on his face. He looked at himself in the mirror and nearly retched. ‘I have to get us both out of this,’ he said to his reflection.

O-O-O

Hermione, for once, had slept in until ten. She looked around the room that she called home for the last three months. She knew Draco was at work by now. She slowly got out of bed and headed for the bathroom to take a long shower to start another day.

O-O-O

She sat in the garden and breathed in the air. She shut her eyes for a moment as she thought of the last three months.

“Hermione,” she heard her name.

Hermione turned and stood as she saw her mother-in-law. She smiled at her. “Hi, Mum.”

Mrs. Malfoy smiled. “Enjoying the outdoors?”

“Yeah,” Hermione said smiling slightly.

“What’s wrong, Hermione?” Mrs. Malfoy looked at her.

“I was just wondering,” she began. “Well. Would it be okay if I went into the Muggle world for a little while?”

Mrs. Malfoy studied Hermione's face sincerely. Hermione looked down.

"I haven't . . . I'd like to visit my mum and dad. I won't take that long," Hermione almost seemed like she were whining.

"Hermione," Mrs. Malfoy held her daughter-in-law's hands. "You're free to leave the grounds."

Hermione looked up at her. She blinked back tears.

"Hermione, did Draco?" she began.

"No, Mum," Hermione said. "I just."

"Hermione, you should go. It's good to honor your parents."

Hermione hugged her mother-in-law. "Thanks, Mum," she said as Mrs. Malfoy led her back to the manor.

O-O-O

"Congratulations Malfoy," the tall black man extended his hand.

Draco looked at the hand of the former Gryffindor. He hesitated a moment and then shook the newly promoted lead inspector's hand. "Congratulations to you, too, Thomas."

"You and Hermione going to celebrate your promotion?" Dean Thomas asked as they walked out of the large conference room on the 51st floor of the Ministry building.

"Uh, I don't know, maybe," Draco answered truthfully. "How 'bout you?"

"Gotta find the girl first before I can celebrate," Dean said as they both shared a laugh.

"I saw you eying the Weasley girl last night," Draco said as he pushed the down button on the lift.

Dean blushed. "I don't think Ginny sees me that way, Draco."

"Hmm," Draco looked at his former classmate, "You never know, Dean. Stranger pairs have happened."

Dean smiled as they both entered the lift.

O-O-O

Draco apparated home for lunch. He walked into the library in their wing. He looked around the room. Hmm, he thought to himself. He headed for their bedroom. Not there either. His face started to flush anger. Where the hell was she?

He wanted her to be the first to know about the promotion. He took a breath. He looked at the watch she had given him for his birthday; 2:30 p.m. Maybe she's having a late lunch downstairs, he thought. He peeked into the dining room. Nobody.

Gardens? He asked himself. He headed out to the back yard. His pace quickened as he reached the luscious gardens. The smell of roses starting to bloom wafted in the air.

"Mother," Draco said as he approached the older witch.

“Ah, Draco,” Mrs. Malfoy said as her son gave her a kiss on the cheek. She gave him one of the yellow roses she had been pruning, “What are you doing home?”

“I was looking for Hermione,” Draco said smiling at her.

“She’s not on the grounds, Draco,” his mother said watching his face turn.

“Is she at St. Mungo’s?” he asked.

“Draco, she went into the Muggle world for the afternoon.”

“You let her go,” he shouted.

“Calm down, Draco,” Mrs. Malfoy said calmly as she grabbed onto his upper arm before he could leave. “She’ll be back later on this afternoon.”

“Where did she go?” Draco asked slightly raising his voice.

“Malfoy Manor is not a prison, Draco.”

Draco looked at her mother and breathed in. “Where is she?”

Narcissa Malfoy returned her son’s look. “Hermione is your wife, Draco.”

“My wife?” Draco threw his arms in the air. “I would have never chosen her.”

“Sometimes life puts you into situations like that, Son. You have to deal with it the best you can. She’s trying, Draco. You should, too.”

“Mum, she and I both know that we shouldn’t be together,” Draco’s voice hitched. “It’s a wonder we haven’t killed each other, yet, knowing our history. Mum, I can’t change the way I am towards her. She . . . She pushes all my buttons.”

“And I’m sure you do hers,” she said.

He let out a laugh. “Where is she, Mum?” he asked softly.

“She’s visiting her parents,” she said.

Draco took in a big breath as she nodded at him. Draco took his leave.

O-O-O

He stood in front of the two marble headstones, arms crossed underneath his invisibility cloak. He read the epitaphs on both the stones. He brushed the leaves off the tops of them as he waited for her.

O-O-O

Hermione exited the small café with a box lunch, a can of iced cold Diet Coke, and a one-liter bottle of water packed in a plastic bag in one hand and a bundle of fresh cut flowers in the other. She smelled the flowers deeply and smiled to herself oblivious to the overcast clouds rolling in. She also hadn’t noticed the cloaked figure whose narrowed eyes followed her down the road.

‘Who the hell gave you those flowers,’ he thought, slightly coloring. He felt the same pent up rage he had felt the night before in the ballroom as he watched all those other wizards take

their turns whisking the Gryffindor lioness around the dance floor.

His pace quickened as he followed her down the street. His eyes softened as she turned into the little cemetery he had just left. 'Of course, the flowers were for her parents,' he thought to himself as he watched her run her palm over her father's name on his headstone.

He made his way behind the two headstones. He watched her as she poured equal parts of the bottled water on both headstones, effectively rinsing them off. She walked to the spigot a couple of yards away to refill the bottle. He watched her face as she returned to her tidying up task. She poured the water into each of the sunken vases in front of each of the stones. He watched her place half of the bunch of flowers into each of the vases.

She sighed before taking a seat on her mother's grave, with her back leaning against the headstone she had just cleaned. He did the same thing, leaning against the back of her father's headstone so that he had her in his line of sight. She opened up the foam box lunch and breathed in the teriyaki smell of the chicken. Draco also breathed in the amazing smell and quickly placed a hand over his stomach, as he was afraid she had heard it rumbling. He watched her intently. She ate quietly as she savored each bite.

She had only finished half of the plate. She burped aloud. Draco smiled to himself. She took a sip of her soda. She leaned her head back against the marble stone and shut her eyes for a moment. He watched her take a breath.

"I've got some news to tell you, Mum, Dad," she said keeping her eyes closed. She took a deep breath. "It's not as if you guys don't already know from up there."

She touched her wedding band, pulled it up to the knuckle and twirled it before returning it to rest at the base of her finger. "I got married."

Draco shut his eyes. He rested his head against the stone just like how she had done moments earlier.

"You know him. You actually met him a few times at Hogwarts," she said turning to face both headstones. Draco was slightly afraid that she had known he was there. She looked right at him for a moment.

"You remember Draco Malfoy," she began, "the blonde haired wizard. You know the salutatorian; I only beat him by a couple of points.

"We danced at the Graduation Ball as Head Boy and Head Girl."

She took a deep breath. She turned back again and leaned her head against the cold stone. "I know what you're thinking," she looked down at her palms in her lap. "We fought like cats and dogs growing up.

"It's different now," he heard her say softly. "He's older now, a little bit more mature.

"Any other witch would probably kill to be in my shoes."

He took in a breath and hoped she didn't notice. He turned to face her profile. "He isn't as bad as you may think he is. He's smart, funny at times. He's got a great smile when he doesn't think you're watching," she said, blushing.

“Dad,” she said turning to her father’s headstone. Draco stopped breathing for a moment, afraid that she had caught him. “I gave him your watch for his birthday. I know Mom had given it to you as an anniversary gift that year I got into Hogwarts. It still works.

“I’m sure he’ll care for it as well as you did,” she said as Draco looked down at the Muggle timepiece. He turned his head in time to see her wipe her cheek.

“I wish you guys could have been at the wedding,” she said bringing her knees into her chest. “It was a very small ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley gave me away. Mr. Weasley was a good stand in for you, Dad. Oh, I wish you could have been there.”

Draco suddenly felt ashamed. He turned to face her. He wanted to wipe the tear that rolled down her cheek. He stood up quietly, making sure not to rustle anything.

He took in a breath. She deserved her privacy. He pulled out his wand. He walked a few meters away from her and apparated.

“All the girls swooned for him at Hogwarts,” she breathed in. “He was quite handsome at the wedding.

“Mum, I,” she paused as if hoping for motherly advice, “I think I’m falling in love with him.”

The day had already been a long one. She rested her eyes. She didn’t know when she had fallen asleep.

O-O-O

She had awoken to claps of thunder. She shot to a standing position. She was already soaking wet. “Shit,” she muttered under her breath as she looked at her watch. It had read 7 p.m. Even with the summer days upon them, the sky had darkened with the high grey cumulus storm clouds above. She sprinted out of the cemetery and down the street.

No one was fool enough to be out on a night like this. She ran towards the wizarding bar. She ran straight through past all the drunkards watching her zip by. She exited out of the Leaky Cauldron and ran up the Wizarding street. By the time she hit the servant’s entrance to the back of the Manor, Hermione was out of breath and doubled over.

She entered the kitchen, soaked. All of the chef elves turned and looked at her with wide eyes. She breathed hard.

Krank had taken the situation in stride. He smiled at the trembling witch. He took his wand out and knew exactly what to do.

Her clothes dried quickly as did her hair. She still trembled. “Thanks, Krank,” she stammered.

“They’re halfway through with the entrée, Missus,” the head chef said.

She shut her eyes. She sighed again.

“You can always eat in here, ma’am,” the chef said offering her a plate.

As much as Hermione wanted to accept the offer, she couldn’t. “I’d better not,” she said shrugging her shoulders. “They’re expecting me.”

O-O-O

15 Jun. Fri. 1935 (7:35 p.m.) BST

"I lost track of time," she said as she took her seat next to Draco, avoiding his eye contact.

"Is this going to be a trend, Ms. Granger?" the older Malfoy had asked in an icy tone.

She took in a breath as she began to cut into her steak. "I really am very sorry, Sir."

"In the real world, you don't have Time Turners to get you out of trouble," he said as she chewed the piece of steak in her mouth. She gulped. "You don't have professors backing you up, either."

"Father, give it a rest," Draco said calmly. He took a bite of his mashed potatoes. "She was only fifteen minutes late."

She gave him a sideways glance. She took a deep breath and returned to her food.

Mr. Malfoy was stewing. Mrs. Malfoy hid a smile. Draco kept eating, avoiding her eye contact. She did the same.

"So, it's almost been three months," Lucius said looking at the young Gryffindor. "Am I going to expect an heir any time soon?"

"Or is she not performing," he looked straight at his son when he said this. The younger Malfoy colored slightly.

"Oh, Lucius," Narcissa said smiling at her husband. "Such language at dinner. Can't we table this until afterwards? Or better yet, let the two youngsters work this out."

"This is all your doing," he said to his wife. "There were others that could have fit the bill effectively."

"Lu," Mrs. Malfoy said curtly.

Hermione wiped the corners of her mouth. "I'm sorry," she said, apologizing for nothing in particular. She shrugged her shoulders and gulped. "If you will excuse me, I'm really not that hungry."

She excused herself from the table. Mr. Malfoy was fuming. Mrs. Malfoy just shook her head. Draco watched Hermione exit the dining hall.

15

Chapter 9

Hermione changed into her last grey T-shirt. Her burgundy colored athletic shorts hung off her hips. She flopped down on the bed.

She couldn't get comfortable. She flipped over onto her stomach and then turned on her side. She looked over to Draco's side of the bed. She touched his pillow. She breathed in.

"Ugh!" she screamed into her own pillow.

She quickly got out of bed. She grabbed the book on her nightstand and headed off to the library. She couldn't fall asleep.

She was grappling with her feelings as she lay on the soft carpet in front of the desk. She opened up the book. She read the same sentence over, and over again.

"Shit," she finally said. "Get over it, Hermione."

Maybe what she said to her parents at the cemetery was more real than she was ready for. Maybe her feelings for Draco were evolving.

'No,' she chided herself. 'You are NOT falling in love with him,' she tried to convince herself. She turned back to the safety of the pages of her book. Fairy Tales were best left between leather bindings.

O-O-O

15 Jun. Fri. 2342 (11:42 p.m.) BST

She didn't realize she was done with the story until she read, 'They lived happily ever after,' for the third time. She closed the book and stretched.

"Shit," she muttered to herself as she caught sight of her wristwatch. She sat up and stumbled to her feet.

It was 11:42. Draco would probably be in bed by now. 'Well, at least he'll be asleep,' she thought to herself, 'If he decided to stay home tonight.'

She took in a deep breath to steady herself. It had been a very long day.

She opened the door to their bedroom. She knew instantly that Draco was not in bed. The low light glowing from the moon streamed in through the thin curtain that covered the balcony entrance. She took two steps forward and then heard the door creak shut behind her.

She almost jumped. She turned around and dropped her book. She stumbled backwards. Draco stepped into the light, shirtless, wearing only his green silk pajama bottoms. The silver chain he wore around his neck glimmered in the moon light. He took a step toward Hermione.

Suddenly she pulled her shirt over her head and threw it at his feet. She shuddered. "Saved you the trouble, Malfoy," she strained. She self— consciously crossed her arms trying to cover up. "I don't have any more sleepwear for you to tear off."

Draco looked down at the shirt then looked up at his wife. He took in a breath. She stumbled backwards onto the bed. She covered her face, afraid of what was going to happen to her that night.

She felt his weight on the bed. He straddled her hips and gently pulled her wrists to the sides of her head. She tried to twist out of his grasp breathing erratically and trying to avoid his gaze. She finally stopped struggling. Draco's face was centimeters from hers. She looked up into his grey eyes. The cold metal of his silver chain made her tremble as the thin rope brushed the skin between her breasts.

She blinked back tears. She gulped. "Get it over with, Malfoy," she said softly, still peering up at him.

He leaned down and kissed the soft skin below her right earlobe. She took in a breath. He whispered into her ear, "Get what over with?"

"Your sexual fix," she said, turning her head to the side.

Draco couldn't help hissing out an exhaled breath. Merlin, why hadn't he noticed how lovely she was before? He let go of her wrists, his arms weakening. She felt his body weight on her.

She turned again to look into his face. He traced her hairline with his forefinger, moving a strand of her hair away from her eyes.

"Merlin," he said propping himself up as he looked into her eyes. "You don't know how beautiful you are, do you, Hermione."

Hermione's breath caught in her throat. "Why did you call me that?"

He fought the urge to smirk at her. His hand traveled over her midriff. She took in a sharp breath as he ran his hand inside the waistband of her shorts. Not once did he break eye contact with her. He gently pulled the dark red shorts down her thighs and off her legs. She was naked underneath him.

"Why not Granger?" she said finally regaining her composure. "Or Mud . . ."

"Shh," Draco said, as he placed his index finger on her lips before his own lips laid a trail of kisses down from the lower part of her neck to her navel. "That's your name isn't it?" he said peering up at her.

"I think you had a little too much wine during dinner, Malfoy," Hermione said, trying hard to stop a moan as Draco sucked on her nipple.

"I know how to hold my liquor," he smirked at her as she looked up. "Besides, we've known each other for over 16 years. You would figure, we'd be on a first name basis by now, Hermione," he said, taking in her other nipple. This time she could not suppress the moan that escaped her lips. She let out a breath through pursed lips.

She looked at him. "What do you want from me, Draco?" she asked slightly panting.

"I found a hole," Draco said coyly.

"You asshole," Hermione cried out, struggling underneath him.

“NO!” Draco laughed sincerely. He touched her cheek. She breathed in again. “What do you Muggles call it? A loophole.”

Hermione looked at him questioningly. At the same time, she could feel his arousal through his pajama bottoms. Her insides were reacting to it. Her breathing started to quicken.

“That’s what you walked in on the other day. Goyle and I were scouring the Muggle Marriage Bylaws. We found an out, Hermione,” he said, touching her face again.

“An out?” Hermione placed her hand over his. It was Draco’s turn to take in a breath.

“Yeah,” Draco said, a little strained. “According to the bylaw, the marriage has to be consummated, with the birth of a child to seal the marriage in the first year. But if no child is conceived within the first three months, both parties may agree to walk away from the marriage without consequence. Both parties, under the law, may not marry for at least one year after the dissolution of the marriage, with the following stipulations being: the Muggle party may choose to marry another Muggle within the year timeframe but the Pureblood may not. After the course of one year, if the Pure-blood so chooses to marry, he or she must again choose a Muggle or Half-blood.”

She took in a deep breath, trying to make sense of what Draco was trying to tell her. Draco, covered her lips with his, catching her by surprise. Then to her own surprise, she kissed him back.

When they finally broke the kiss, they were both panting for air. Draco locked eyes with her. He adjusted himself, almost painfully. “You can tell me to stop, Hermione, if you want me to,” he said as he ran his hand down the inside of her now wet thighs. She took in a breath through pursed lips.

“Please don’t stop, Draco,” she said as her hands found their way down his back and into the waistband of his pajamas. Draco looked into her eyes and gave her one of his signature smirks. She pulled the pajama bottoms down to his knees. Draco kicked them off.

Draco took her lips again as he entered her. She moaned his name. It sent Draco over the edge as he thrust into her. They made love over, and over again. And, for the first time, Hermione felt safe in his arms.

Hermione lay against Draco’s chest. It was half past two when she finally took a glimpse at her watch, the only piece of wardrobe she still had on. She looked up at the sleepy Draco.

He looked back at her, smiling genuinely. “You can leave later on today,” he said as he realized it was early Friday morning.

Hermione grew suspicious of him. She squinted her eyes at him. “Are you going to have me killed once I leave the Manor?” she asked softly, half-joking as she touched his chest.

Draco touched her face. He drew her in closer to his body, “Get some sleep, Hermione. It’s been a long day.”

Chapter 10

Hermione awoke almost forgetting where she was as she felt another limb across her midsection. She slowly peeked back; Draco. She shut her eyes and the events of the previous night flooded back. She slowly got out of bed, taking care not to wake him. She smiled to herself as she quickly pulled out a change of clothes and entered their bathroom.

She showered quickly and got dressed. She ran her hairbrush through her hair. She looked at herself in the mirror for a moment. She took a deep breath before pulling the door open.

“Draco,” she said surprised.

The blonde haired wizard smiled at her. She gulped as he moved a strand of hair away from her eyes. “Morning,” he said.

“Morning,” she responded softly, looking up into his grey eyes. She took in a breath as she allowed him to pass her into the bathroom.

“Draco,” she called to him. “You’re still allowing me to leave, aren’t you?”

“We’ll talk about this after I take my shower, Hermione,” he said shutting the door behind him. He smirked to himself.

Hermione froze for a moment as she stared at the door. She slowly began to pack. When she arrived three months ago, she had not brought with her much of a wardrobe; much of it was Muggle casual wear and two dress robes. When she finished packing, everything fit into her large duffle bag. She took a deep breath. She peeked again at the bathroom door before walking out to the balcony.

What was he planning to do with her? Was he going to take back what he said earlier that morning when he held her in his arms? The thought made her eyes well up. She had to grab onto the balcony rail to steady her as she felt a sinking feeling at the pit of her stomach. A tear slipped down her cheek and onto the back of her left hand. It glistened in the sunlight as it hit her wedding band.

“Hey,” Draco snuck up behind her, bare-chested, wearing only his black trousers and dress shoes. She didn’t turn around. She bit her lip, trying to keep the tears at bay. Draco turned her around.

“You didn’t really mean you were going to let me go, did you, Draco,” she said looking down, catching a glimpse of his Death Eater mark. She continued to avoid his gaze. He gently turned her chin up. He saw the tear streaked cheeks.

She looked up at him, gulping. He gently wiped her right cheek with his thumb. She took in another sharp breath.

“I thought you’d like to do the honors,” he said as he handed her two documents placing his wand on the ledge.

She looked at them. The Ministry of Magic — United Kingdom, Family Services, the top of each of the parchments read. Both were dated 15 March of that year. On one of the documents, next to Draco's printed name was his signature. Below Draco's name was printed 'Hermione Granger Malfoy.' She, too, had signed her name. She saw the hitch in her signature as she remembered pausing before finishing it with 'Malfoy.' She studied the dark quill ink with which she penned her signature and gulped.

She looked up at him. He nodded his encouragement and even smiled a little. "I figured you don't want to be with me as much," he looked at her. He had to look away for a moment, not being able to look into her deep brown eyes. "As much as I don't want to be with you," he flushed.

Hermione tried to force a smile. He nodded at her again. She tore their marriage license and certificate in two. Draco took them from her and further tore up the documents. Hermione couldn't breathe for a moment. She watched him take his wand and wave it over the documents. They caught on fire and they both watched the pieces of paper turn to ash. What little wind there was wafted the ash particles away. Hermione took a deep breath as they both watched the last of the ashes fly over the back yard and scatter.

"Come on," he said, extending his hand. "I'll escort you to the Leaky Cauldron."

She looked up at him, trying to hide her suspicion. She hesitantly took his hand. He smiled at her.

"If you're so worried about my 'henchmen' targeting you for death," Draco said as they entered back into the room, "I promise you they won't touch you with me around."

She couldn't help laughing. He smiled at her. Why had it taken them this long to be civil with each other? He turned away from her. He had to steady his breathing. He didn't realize that he still held her hand. He let her go, almost a little dismissively. He turned towards her smiling a little.

He pulled his shirt on and quickly dressed. He placed the wand into the left breast pocket of his dress cloak. He tapped his chest feeling the long stick underneath the fabric. "So where are your bags?" he asked offering to carry them for her.

"I've got it, Draco, thanks," she said, slipping the strap of her duffle bag onto her shoulder.

"That's it?" Draco asked.

"I didn't have much to pack," she said looking up at him.

"All those dress robes," Draco said pointing to the closet they shared.

"I wouldn't feel right," Hermione said looking into his grey eyes. "Your mother bought those."

"Hermione."

"Draco, really," Hermione said, her brown eyes piercing his grey ones. "They're not really me."

"Shall we," Draco smiled as he again offered to carry her duffle bag. She looked at him again. She nodded and gave him her bag to carry. He led her out.

“We should tell your mum and dad,” Hermione stopped for a moment.

“I’ll take care of that, Hermione,” he said flashing a sincere smile. She followed him out.

Chapter 11

16 Jun. Sat. 0800 (8:00 a.m.) BST

They walked out of the manor quietly. They didn't speak for a while. She slipped her small hand into his. He hesitated for a moment but he smiled slightly and squeezed her hand. She blushed slightly as a tingle ran up her arm. The walk to the Leaky Cauldron was a short twenty-minute one as they walked hand in hand.

Draco breathed in as they finally arrived at the travel point. He reluctantly let her hand go. He gave her the duffle bag. He reached into the pocket of his robe and held the familiar thin stick out. He smiled and gave her back her wand. "I guess this is where we part," he said, looking into her eyes, his grey eyes piercing through hers. She took the wand from his hand. She nodded at him.

She looked down, blinking back a tear. Draco lifted her chin with his finger. He rubbed her cheek with his thumb. He bent down, thought twice, and then kissed her on her cheek. He turned to walk away.

"Draco," Hermione said softly as she adjusted the strap on her shoulder. "Can I buy you breakfast?"

Draco turned. He searched her face again. Hermione seemed as if she were holding her breath. "Hermione, really."

"Draco, please," Hermione almost sounded as if she were begging. She cleared her throat. "Think of it as one last wifely duty."

He nodded with a smile. "Okay," Draco said stretching his hand out. "The Cauldron's breakfast fare isn't that great, though."

Hermione hesitantly placed her hand into his. She smiled back warmly. "I was actually thinking of a Muggle eatery."

"You're not trying to poison me are you?" Draco smiled again.

"Very funny," she smiled back. She led him through the Leaky Cauldron and into the Muggle world. "Come on."

O-O-O

"Ono Kine Grindz," Draco said, reading off the sign above the entrance to the small eatery. "Why would anybody enter a place that tells you not to?"

She smiled up at him and nodded their entrance. He canted his eyebrow, but returned her smile and followed.

They headed towards a booth near the rear of the café. The head waitress, a matronly like older woman, smiled to herself as she grabbed two menus and headed towards the young couple.

“Hermione,” the older woman said, smiling and taking the young woman into her arms. Hermione blinked back tears.

“Hey, Lani,” Hermione smiled as she took a step backwards. Draco stood quietly. Hermione turned to the young man.

“So who’s the handsome stranger,” Lani asked as she pointed towards the booth for them to sit down.

Hermione blushed. Draco also colored slightly. “Um, Lani Makena, I’d like you to meet Draco Malfoy,” the young witch hesitated, “A good friend of mine from school.”

“Ah, a fellow teacher, then?” she smiled.

“Actually, no,” Hermione tried to find the right words. “He and I went to boarding school together.”

“School sweethearts?” Lani smiled jokingly.

“No,” the young couple both answered quickly.

“I’ll be right back with some coffee,” Lani laughed.

“So what’s good?” he asked as Lani poured the two of them a cup of coffee. Both Hermione and the older woman raised their eyebrows.

“Everything’s good, Draco,” Hermione said as she opened the menu in front of him as if he needed help doing it.

“Hermione, may I suggest the usual?” the woman gave her a gentle smile.

Hermione nodded and gave her both of their menus. Draco was a little surprised. He shrugged his shoulders at her.

“Coming right up,” the older woman headed back to the kitchen.

“What did we just order?” Draco asked a little dumbfounded.

“Sunday Special,” Hermione said before taking a sip of her Kona coffee. She savored the taste.

“Um, it’s Saturday, Hermione,” Draco said logically.

Hermione couldn’t help laughing as she looked at him. He eventually joined her.

“So, Hermione,” Lani said returning from the kitchen. She hovered near Draco’s side of the booth. “Where have you been hiding yourself?”

“I’ve been busy, Lani, traveling throughout the United Kingdom,” Hermione lied. She watched as the older woman smiled back at her.

“So what sort of sights have you both seen?” the older woman smiled at Draco.

Draco looked at Hermione and then back at the older woman. He smiled back at her. “Hermione and I have seen the whole gamut of what the U.K. has to offer,” he also bent the truth.

She smiled as she turned to her old customer. Hermione noticed that Lani caught a glimpse of the gold wedding band on her left ring finger. Hermione's ears started to flame. It was a good thing she decided to wear her hair down today.

"I'll be right back with your order," she smiled again before she left the young couple.

"She seems like a nice lady," Draco said as he took a sip of his coffee.

"She is," she smiled. "I practically grew up in this place. Lani's the closest thing I have to family."

Draco studied Hermione's face. She looked down at her cup, averting his eyes, afraid she would break out in tears. "Mum, Dad, and I used to come here every Sunday morning to have breakfast when I was growing up. Even after getting into Hogwarts, we wouldn't miss a Sunday on holidays," she said, stirring her coffee.

Draco smiled back at her. "I get the impression that the food is divine here."

"You betcha," Lani interrupted as she brought them their rather large order. Draco looked at his side of the table and wondered how the old woman was able to balance all the dishes. She smiled, "Enjoy."

"Thanks, Lani," Hermione said as the older woman squeezed the younger woman's right shoulder before leaving the couple to eat in peace.

Draco still couldn't believe the amount of food that lay before the both of them. It was family style service. The stack of banana macadamia nut pancakes was high. The platter of different meats was just as high: pork sausage patties, Portuguese sausage, Spam, bacon and ham were in mounds. Two sets of eggs were also set on a platter: four over medium eggs and a mound of well scrambled eggs sat along side each other.

"I thought Dumbledore was the only one who could conjure up such a feast," Draco said, still wide eyed.

"Tuck in, Draco," she smiled as she grabbed three pancakes. Draco raised his eyebrows at first then smiled back. He grabbed a stack of four pancakes.

He piled his plate up fairly full. He shook his head smiling to himself. He still couldn't believe how much food was still left even after Hermione piled her plate full. They sat quietly gulping down food, savoring the taste.

O-O-O

"I followed you yesterday," Draco said, enjoying the last of his pancake and Portuguese sausage. She studied him as she stirred what was remaining in her coffee cup.

"They promoted me to lead inspector. I have to work with Dean Thomas," Draco continued.

"He's a good guy," Hermione said, squinting at him. "You followed me?"

"I wanted to tell you about the promotion," he said, "And about the loophole."

She looked down at her cup of coffee. Draco watched as a tear dropped from her eyelash. "I haven't visited them since before we . . . got married," she said looking up as she blinked

back another tear.

Draco looked at her thoughtfully. "You were very close to your parents," he said studying her face.

"Yes," she said softly. She looked into his eyes, which didn't seem so harsh anymore. "I was twenty minutes late for dinner that night."

She shut her eyes again, trying to fight back tears. "There's one thing about teaching that will never get old. You meet some verbose parents sometimes. Their kid was a good kid overall. Academically, he wasn't all that great," she gave him a weak smile. "By the time I got out of the school building, I was already ten minutes late. It was one of those days when I wished I had my wand with me; it would have saved time to apparate."

She looked up at him, "I broke into a run. It's a good thing I had on muggle running shoes that day. It would have been a half an hour walk. I figured I'd get there in half the time if I sprinted. I tried calling the house with my cell phone; all I got was the answering machine.

"They were probably already dead by then, though," she looked up into his eyes again.

He took in a deep breath. She gulped. "Draco," she said, pausing for a very long time. "Were you in on it? Did you . . ."

"Corey Reimers was in charge of that mission," he said. It was his turn to look into her deep brown eyes. "I didn't even know we were targeting them, Hermione.

"Hermione," he put his hand over hers. "I got there about the same time you did. I was actually afraid you'd notice me there. I tried to look as inconspicuous amongst the gathering crowd as I could.

"I'm really sorry, Hermione," he said squeezing her hand reassuringly.

"It wasn't your fault, Draco," she said looking at him sadly. "There's a Muggle saying. We say that everything is fair in love and war."

She tried to smile. She gulped again. She caught a glimpse of her wristwatch. It was fifteen minutes to nine. She looked up at him and then turned to find Lani. "Lani," she motioned to the owner, "Check please."

Draco looked at Hermione. He knew their time together was almost up. It was his turn to give her a weak smile.

"You're going to be late for work if you don't start out now," she said reaching into her pockets.

"Hermione," he said laughing. He fished a twenty-pound note from his pocket. "I've got it."

"Draco," she said picking up the note and handing it back to him. "I told you that I was treating you to breakfast."

"Hermione," he said smiling as he got up. "It's all right."

"Draco," she said resting her hands on his chest. She gulped, trying to regain her composure. "I've got this one."

Draco knew it was no use arguing with her. He watched her place her own twenty-pound note on the table, way too much money for the ten-pound breakfast. She tried to pull her duffle bag onto her shoulder. Draco beat her to it. He placed it on his shoulder, silently offering to hold it for her until they got outside the café.

They both waved to the older woman and her cook husband. "Come back, soon, you two," the woman said, smiling.

They returned her smile as Draco held the door for her. They exited the tiny café, full and ready for the Saturday. They walked in a peaceful silence as they neared the travel point.

"So what are you planning to do now?" he asked as they reached the small entrance to the Leaky Cauldron. He gave her the duffle.

"I don't know," she said shrugging her shoulders after placing the duffle strap on her left shoulder. "Probably try to beg for my old teaching job."

"They won't just give it back to you?" he asked genuinely concerned as he tried to stall for as long as he could. He was going to be late for work that day; not a very good way to start his lead inspector career.

She smiled. "After Mum and Dad were," she paused. "After they passed away, I asked for some time off. I didn't think I would go back into the war."

"I already lost Harry, Ron," she began as tears started to flow. Draco took her in his arms. She trembled, crying into his chest. She finished softly, "I couldn't let Mum's and Dad's deaths be in vain, Draco."

He just held her there for a moment. Several passersby raised their eyebrows at the young couple, wondering if the two were saying their last goodbyes.

"Everything's going to be all right, Hermione," he gently pushed her off to look into her eyes. He smiled, "I promise you."

Hermione returned his smile. She hesitated for a moment before she kissed him on his cheek. "You'd better go," she said, tapping his shirtfront. She turned to walk away.

Draco wanted to grab her and just hold her for a while longer. Draco watched the back of her move farther and farther away. He turned to open the door of the WIZARDING bar. She turned suddenly. She adjusted her duffle.

"Draco," she said softly. He heard her. He turned expectantly.

"I hope you find that one true someone," she paused, giving him a weak smile, "with whom you will fall in love and share the rest of your life."

"Good luck to you Draco," she said, smiling sincerely at him, before turning the corner. Away from his eyesight, she allowed the tears to flow.

Draco stood dumbfounded again, allowing her words to settle. He took in a breath, debating whether to go after her. He took hold of the door that only WIZARDING folk could see, closed his eyes as he framed her face for the last time into his memory. He entered the establishment with a slight sense of urgency, as he knew he was already ten minutes late for work at the Ministry building.

Chapter 12

Almost 3 years later

15 Mar. Mon. 1700 (5:00 p.m.) GMT

Draco turned the corner and headed down the hallway. He smiled to himself as he headed to the small little office on the bottom floor of the Ministry. He nodded to the receptionist as he entered.

“Ah, Mr. Malfoy,” she said, almost blushing as she smiled back at the infamous blonde wizard. “Go right in. Mr. Norris is expecting you.”

Draco nodded and smiled as he entered the door of the Head of Family Services. The short bespectacled man looked up from his papers. “Ah, young Mr. Malfoy,” Mr. Norris said standing up to shake the younger wizard’s hand. “Please have a seat.”

Draco took a seat in front of the old wizard’s desk. Mr. Norris looked over some paperwork. “I’ve looked over your marriage application, Draco,” the old man started, “Oh, by the way, how is Ms. Profesi?”

“Celeste is fine, sir,” Draco answered. “We both can’t wait until June.”

Mr. Norris’s face slightly blanched. Draco noticed the change in the older wizard’s countenance. “Uh, Mr. Norris, is something wrong?”

“Draco, I’ve been looking over the records, and, well. It seems,” Mr. Norris’s voice hitched. “Well.”

“Mr. Norris, just spit it out,” Draco encouraged.

“It appears that you are married,” Mr. Norris said as he removed his glasses for a moment to wipe his brow.

“Celeste and I haven’t exchanged vows yet, sir,” Draco said smiling.

Mr. Norris took a deep breath, “According to the paperwork, you and Ms. Hermione Granger are still married.”

“*What!*” Draco erupted.

O-O-O

Draco, leaning the back of his head against the rear wall of the lift, opened his eyes as he heard the doors open. “Hey,” Draco said as he nodded at the tall wizard.

“You look like you wouldn’t pass up an invitation to drink with me tonight,” Dean Thomas said with a laugh.

Draco joined in. “I think I could use a drink,” he said to his former classmate.

O-O-O

Three fire whiskeys into the conversation, Draco had already explained to Dean his situation. They both took a breath.

“So what are you going to do?” Dean asked as he ordered a water from the barman.

“I don’t know,” Draco said. “Damn Hermione!”

Dean couldn’t stop a laugh from escaping. Draco turned to his best man. “What?”

“She could always raise your ire, couldn’t she?” Dean said laughing again.

Draco actually joined in, “Yeah.”

“It’s a wonder you married her in the first place,” Dean quipped before sipping his drink.

Draco breathed in, “Mum’s choice.”

Dean studied his friend. “Damn Muggle Marriage Laws, huh,” the tall Gryffindor began. “It’s a good thing you got the Ministry to repeal them.”

Draco looked back at his old classmate as he took a sip. He started to feel dizzy, probably too much alcohol. “Yeah,” he said softly as he thought of the former Head Girl.

Chapter 13

14 May Fri. 1900 (7:00 p.m.) BST

"It's too bad Celeste couldn't make it tonight, Draco," Ginny said as she placed the garlic-mashed potatoes on the table.

"Yeah," Draco said smiling at the ginger haired mediwitch, "Fashion shoot; such is the life of a model, right."

Dean squeezed his wife's hand as she sat next to him. She kissed his cheek. Draco watched the expectant parents' show of affection and couldn't help smiling to himself.

"Let's eat, shall we?" Dean said. The three ate the home cooked meal.

O-O-O

Draco peeked at Celeste before he shut his eyes, drifting off to sleep. Draco felt himself breathing deeply before succumbing to slumber, remembering the conversation he had had with the Thomases earlier that evening at dinner.

Dean was the one that suggested it. Ginny even chimed in after initially flinching at the idea. Both knew that was the option of last resort. Declaring Hermione Granger dead would allow a quick solution to his problem.

It had been a two month search for his "ex" already and they had gotten nowhere. She wasn't in Wizarding London. With Dean's contacts in the Muggle world, they couldn't find her either. It was as if she dropped under the radar.

O-O-O

He walked out of the familiar dank place. He blinked twice before he realized where he actually was. He reached the castle's main foyer and walked out into the main hall. He looked up at the ceiling and smiled to himself as he remembered the little precocious eleven-year-old talk excitedly about the enchanted ceiling to the other First Years around her.

A cry rang out into the night. He quickly ran out to the landing that overlooked the waters a hundred meters below the edge of the castle. The full moon shed light on the two figures seemingly in a scuffle.

Draco narrowed his eyes. Celeste? The blonde witch held a dagger above her head as the other woman seemed to be fending her off. Draco ran towards the two.

"Celeste," he shouted. Both the witches turned towards him. He took in a sharp breath. He approached the two.

Everything seemed like it were occurring in slow motion. He saw her knees buckle. She was able to knock both the dagger and the Death Eater's wand out of her hands. They fell at the base of the wall. Celeste pushed at the woman's shoulder. He heard her cry out in pain.

“Hermione,” Draco shouted. He saw a mad scramble for the thin piece of wood that fell to the ground in the scuffle.

Celeste was able to grab for it first. “*Stupefy!*” his fiancée shouted at the other witch. The wounded woman sprang violently back to the short wall. Celeste looked back at Draco and began to run.

Draco saw her lose her balance before toppling over the wall. Draco moved quickly, hastily dropping his wand as he grabbed for her. He caught her right forearm. He pitched forward.

He saw the dagger next to his wand that the two witches were fighting over. He saw the blood pool around both the blade and the wooden piece. His eyes grew large as he looked over the edge of the wall.

He slipped a little more forward, losing his grip slightly as his hands moved up to her wrist. He heard her whimper in pain. She looked up into his eyes. He took a deep breath. Her eyes fluttered.

“Hermione,” he said, squeezing a bit harder. “Hermione, I can’t get a good grip, here.”

“Why did you call me that?” she asked, her voice tinged with fright.

“That’s your name, isn’t it?” he said. “Look, Hermione, you’re gonna have to climb up a little.”

She just looked up at him wondering what he was playing at. She slipped a little. “Why are you doing this?” she asked.

“I’m trying to help you up here,” he said sounding a bit annoyed.

“Why don’t you just take aim and use the killing curse on me now,” Hermione said, her breath hitched as she tried to stifle a sob.

“You’ve gone mad, haven’t you?” Draco said wide eyed. “Why would I want that?”

“You’re a Death Eater,” she said, taking in a sharp breath. “You kill Muggle-borns like me.”

“Death Eater?” he said as he saw the mark on his arm start to slither. He shook his head. “The war is way over, Hermione. You should know that.”

“What are you on about?” Hermione asked, gulping.

It was a dream. It had to have been, Draco tried to rationalize. “Hermione,” he said looking down into her deep brown eyes. He took in a sharp breath, “In my reality, the war is over. This isn’t real.”

“You’re insane, Draco,” Hermione said slipping a little bit more out of his grip.

“Hermione, look at me,” Draco said sharply causing her to shake off impending unconsciousness. “I need you to help me pull you up.”

He saw her look up into his face. He pitched forward again. She was slipping. “I need your other arm, Hermione,” he tried to say calmly.

"I can't feel anything on my left side, Draco," she said choked. Draco looked at her dangling arm. He saw the blood roll down her arm from the chest wound. His hands held onto her fingers as she slipped further.

"Give me your other hand," he said tensely.

"Let go of me, Draco," she said softly, looking up into his grey eyes, realizing that if he didn't let go he would also plummet to his death.

"You're barking," he said, as his eyes grew bigger.

"I'm already dead, Draco," she said, gulping as she felt him pitch forward. "Please let me go. You have to . . ."

"I will do no such thing. I can be just as stubborn as you are," he said in shock. What the hell was she saying? "Give me your other hand, now. Hermione, please," he said pleadingly, as he almost lost his balance.

He tried to take into account everything. 'If I could just use one of my hands to *Accio* my wand,' he thought. His grip on her was faltering; he saw her bruised wrist from where he had grabbed her. If he could just get to his wand, he would be able to use *Levicorpus* to save her. Why had he dropped it? He looked over the edge again as he slipped a little more forward.

He saw a tear roll down her cheek. He watched her swing her left arm up, taking several tries before she was able to get it over her head. He knew she was stifling a cry of pain on each attempt.

'That's it Hermione,' he said in his mind as she reached up for his hands. He pitched forward again. He caught sight of her dark brown eyes. He had to take in a deep breath as she looked into his eyes, a look of fear hidden behind dark irises.

Her fingers worked nimbly before Draco realized what was happening. His grip finally faltered. He watched in shock as she dropped the one hundred meters down the face of the cliff.

"NO!" he screamed as he heard the splash into the waters below.

"NO!" he screamed again as he jolted up right in bed. He looked at the sleeping witch next to him. She didn't even notice him. Draco hyperventilated for a few moments before finally calming down.

He didn't get any more sleep that night. He sat in the bay window in Celeste's bedroom looking out into the affluent part of the Wizarding world.

Chapter 14

A.N. So, okay. Draco feels totally handcuffed by his familial obligations; i guess that could be one reason why he seems bipolar with regards for his true feelings for Hermione. Oh, don't forget, 3 years have passed since leaving the cafe. Also, Draco, Dean, and Ginny become close over the years.

3 Jun. Thurs. 0900 (9:00 a.m.) BST

Dean stopped Draco at the 51st floor lobby after the tall blonde wizard exited the lift. He pulled him back into the lift.

"What the hell," Draco asked as he wriggled himself out of the Gryffindor's grip as the doors closed on them.

"We have to go downstairs," Dean said with a smile.

"I just came from downstairs," Draco said studying his old classmate's face. "What are you grinning about?"

All Dean did was keep smiling smugly as they rode down to the eleventh floor. He held the door open for Draco as they stepped out onto the floor that housed what would be equivalent to forensic labs in the Muggle world.

Dean led him through the lobby and down the hall to the fifth door on their right. Draco again raised his eyebrows as he looked at the door to the lab that they use to track Dark Magic users.

He shrugged his shoulders as he followed Dean in. They looked around the large room that mirrored that of a NASA control center. The only two occupants, a husband and wife team looked up from their paperwork. They both headed towards their new visitors.

"Mr. Thomas," Colin Creevey extended his hand toward his former housemate and then towards the blonde Slytherin. "Mr. Malfoy. Welcome to our world."

Marta laughed lightheartedly. She shook both their hands, "We've been expecting you. Mr. Thomas asked us to look into your dilemma."

"We think we can give you a hand," Colin said as he waved them over to the monitor.

Marta typed on the keyboard, calling up a map of the world. Colin handed her a slip of paper. She keyed in what looked to be some sort of serial number.

"It's not that we broke any laws or anything," Colin said smiling. "But we had to get through some red tape from the Wand Registry Section of the Ministry. I kinda dropped your name, Mr. Malfoy."

“Colin, please call me Draco,” Draco said to the younger man. “Why did you mention me?”

“We kinda needed to get Ms. Hermione’s wand number,” he looked up at the older man waiting for him to hex him.

Draco looked puzzled. Dean placed a hand on Draco’s shoulder. “Let him explain,” Dean said.

“Well, you see, we’re going to try to track her wand,” Colin said.

“This machine is a multi-tasker,” Marta chimed in. “After the war, we first used it to catch anybody using Dark Magic. We can pinpoint the offender’s whereabouts within minutes of the offense. We can have teams out to bring them to justice within an hour.”

“Now we all know that Ms. Hermione was never one for Dark Magic,” Colin said, answering the questioning look on Draco’s face. “But this equipment can also tag offenders’ general locations if we want to track them. It’s sort of like GPS tracking systems in the Muggle world.”

Draco nodded, as he finally understood. “Any hits from her wand?”

“Not within the last six months,” Marta answered.

“It only goes back six months,” Colin said, “Otherwise the system might fry with information overload.”

“How general is general?” Dean asked.

“Within the first hour we’ll get the country that she’s in. Within six hours, the city,” Colin answered. “It will take another day to ascertain the exact address.”

“The system still needs improving, but we figured whatever help we can provide,” Marta began.

“Will be appreciated,” Draco said smiling. “Thank you.”

Dean shook the two lab partners’ hands. “Keep us abreast of the matter. But don’t shirk your responsibilities to the Ministry either,” Dean said as the two nodded.

Dean led Draco out into the hall. The blonde wizard looked at his former house rival. “This could work, couldn’t it,” he said softly.

Dean nodded. “Come on, we’ve got our weekly meeting to go to. It’s in your office this time.”

A.N. Okay, you guys twisted my arm => I guess I should bring Hermione back.

Chapter 15

Whoops

6 Jun. Sun 2145 (9:45 p.m.) HST

They had had a late working dinner. The two smiled at each other as he washed the dishes and she entered the last of her grades into her laptop computer. She saved her work before standing up to help the young man finish rinsing the dishes.

“Mommy,” the two year old said as she wriggled in her booster seat. She took a sip of her juice from the small cup.

“What is it, Hon?” the young mother asked as she turned to face her daughter.

“I’m full,” the brown haired youngster said as she brought her cup down on the table a little too hard.

It was as if Hermione were watching it in slow motion. The cover of the juice cup flew off and the cup teetered quite violently. The contents splashed upwards before spilling onto the laptop keyboard.

The child’s eyes mirrored the saucer look of her mother’s. They heard the sizzle and the sparks from the electronic equipment. Jonathan Diego quickly wiped his hands on his jeans and pulled the youngster out of her chair after pulling the cord out of the wall socket.

Hermione pulled a tea towel out of the drawer and quickly covered up the small fire that was erupting from the fried computer. She took a deep breath to calm down.

Jon was checking to make sure the two year old was not injured. Hermione saw her daughter’s lower lip quiver. The young mother joined them.

Hermione rubbed the girl’s back. The little girl started to shed tears as she turned to run out of the kitchen. Hermione stood up. Jon nodded at her.

Hermione found her daughter huddled in the far corner of the bedroom they shared. Hermione picked up several stuffed animals from the ground and placed them on her daughter’s bed that was next to the window. She went over to her daughter and picked the crying child up into her arms.

“It’s okay, Lois,” she said rubbing the child’s back. “It’s just a computer.”

The little girl looked up at her mother. “I’m sorry, Mommy.”

“It’s all right,” Hermione kissed her on the top of her head.

“But your work?”

“I can fix it, Kiddo,” she reassured her.

The child took in a breath. “Mommy,” she said softly, looking into her mother’s eyes. “A visitor is coming.”

Hermione let out a laugh. “Oh, hon, I don’t think a repairman is going to come this late at night,” she said. As she said this, goose bumps ran down her arm. She had to take in a breath. “Why don’t you go brush your teeth and get ready for bed?”

O-O-O

Hermione returned to the kitchen only after getting Lois to fall asleep. She sighed as she took a seat in front of the carnage that used to be her personal laptop.

Jon massaged her shoulders. Hermione closed her eyes. “So,” Jon asked as he deepened the massage. “What do we do now?”

Hermione sighed again as she opened her eyes. “The students see us for the last time tomorrow. We need those grades.”

“We can always calculate them manually,” Jon said taking a seat next to her.

“Fifty plus assignments per class. Thirty students in each class,” she said calculating the numbers in her head. “Six classes.”

“Yeah,” Jon said, sounding as exasperated as she looked. “We could call a repair person.”

“At this late hour?” she asked looking at her watch. “Besides, the hard drive’s fried. He wouldn’t be able to retrieve any data anyway.”

“We don’t have to give them their grades,” he said smiling.

“Ha, ha,” Hermione said fidgeting nervously with the gold band on her left ring finger. She stood up and headed toward her room. He followed.

He leaned against the doorjamb as he watched her pull open the drawer of her nightstand. He watched her take a deep breath before turning around. He raised his eyebrow.

“Are you sure,” he asked her as she walked past him back to the kitchen.

“What other choice do we have?” she asked as she waved the long stick and uttered a repairing spell as Jon joined her in front of the computer.

They both held their breaths as Hermione pushed the power button. The “initializing Windows” screen came on and the computer quickly booted up.

“Yes,” they both exclaimed giving each other high fives.

“How long has it been?” he asked.

“I haven’t touched the wand in three years,” she said softly.

“Do you regret using it?” he asked.

She smiled as she shrugged her shoulders, “What’s the worse that can happen?”

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews so far.

Chapter 16

A.N. Okay, so this is where life gets really complicated for everyone involved.

In the neighborhood

7 Jun. Mon. 2150 (9:50 p.m.) HST

Hermione kissed the child's head as she pulled the empty pan of eggplant and Italian sausage lasagna they had just eaten for dinner. Jon brought two cups of coffee to the table and the New York style cheesecake that Hermione had baked early before school that morning.

As Hermione began to pour Lois her fruit punch, they heard the doorbell ring. Hermione raised her eyebrows. She looked at her watch. It was nearly 10.

Lois's eyes grew large. "Mommy," she began softly. "Your visitor's here."

Hermione shivered a little, although, she didn't know why. She gave Lois a reassuring smile. "Honey, I don't think that's the repairman. Mommy already took care of the computer."

"Yeah, Kiddo," Jon said rubbing the child's back as he raised his eyebrows at Hermione. "It's probably just Grandma Celia."

Hermione left the kitchen to answer the door. Another set of goose bumps ran down her arm. She shook off the feeling before opening the door.

Her face nearly blanched as pale as the young man's standing in front of her. The young man took in a sharp breath as he saw her. He regained his composure before she did hers.

"Granger," he said nodding at her.

Hermione gulped. "Dra," she began and then continued softly, "Malfoy, what are you doing here?"

"I was in the neighborhood," he said as he kept his eyes on hers. "I thought I'd say, 'hello,' to my wife."

Hermione's knees buckled. Draco took a step forward. She had to lean on the doorjamb to regain her balance.

"Hey, who was it?" Jon asked as he held the door open with one hand while placing his other around Hermione's waist.

Draco colored slightly seeing this other man be so close to his ex-wife. Draco straightened up as he eyed the couple. She had remarried, obviously.

Hermione took in a breath, the gears in her head turning. She turned to Draco and then back to Jon. She took in another deep breath.

"Jonathan Diego, this is Draco Malfoy, my ex-husband," she said. "Malfoy, this is Jon, my husband."

Both men took in a breath as they shook each other's hand. 'Oh, Hermione's definitely going to pay for that,' Jon thought to himself. "Please, come in, Draco. We're just about to have dessert, weren't we, Hon."

Jon opened the door further so that their guest could enter. He smiled at Hermione kissing her on the cheek and then whispered so that only she could hear. "Lucy, you've got some splaining to do," he said in an exaggerated Cuban accent.

She gently pushed him off. She looked into his face pleadingly. He nodded, agreeing to go along with whatever she had in mind.

Meanwhile Draco looked around at the modest surroundings. He turned to the kitchen area where a little girl sat watching the three adults intently. She looked at the visitor, studying his face. She breathed in as she noticed the man's eyes and then quickly looked away.

O-O-O

The only other available seat at the small round table was between Hermione and Jon. Draco sat across the small child, studying her just as intently as she did him earlier while Jon plated the cheesecake and Hermione poured another cup of coffee. Jon offered the first plate to Draco. He accepted it.

All three adults sat down. Draco ate a forkful of the rich dessert and actually cracked a smile. "This is good," Draco said as he watched Hermione give a small bite sized serving to the little toddler.

"Hermione's a great chef," Jon said as he took a bite of the dessert.

Draco nodded as he ate some more. He took a sip of coffee.

"So, Draco," Jon said as he too, took a sip. "What brings you to our part of the world?"

"Umm," Draco began. He turned to Hermione, "Does he know?"

Jon smiled to himself. "Yes, he does. He's a . . . a Muggle-born, too," Hermione bent the truth a little describing her Pure-blood Squib housemate.

Draco nodded. "Uh," he said looking at Hermione, "There was a glitch in paperwork with the Ministry."

"A glitch?" Hermione said.

"According to them, we're still married," Draco answered.

Hermione almost choked on her coffee. She coughed. The little girl looked up at her concerned.

"We tore up the certificate and license," Hermione said.

"Yeah, well, magic isn't always perfect," he began as he finished his serving of cheesecake. Jon offered him more. Draco hesitated at first, but then took another helping.

"So you came here to tell me about the glitch?" she asked.

"I came to get you to sign divorce papers," he said as he took another bite.

Hermione gulped, "Divorce papers?"

"I can't seem to get married without us getting divorced first. Bigamy laws and all," he said a little terse.

Hermione looked down. He was remarrying. "Do you have the papers with you?" she asked softly.

"No, we have to sign them on site," he said as he finished his second helping. "I figured we could go to the Honolulu offices to sign them. Tomorrow, perhaps."

"I can't do that tomorrow," she said.

"Okay, why not?" Draco asked.

"I've got a classroom to finish cleaning before we break for the summer," she said as she saw in the corner of her eye the amused look her pretend husband had as he followed the banter back and forth.

"Oh, Hermione," Jon quipped, "You could probably have that done by midday."

Hermione glared at Jon. Draco nodded as he swallowed the rest of his coffee.

"It will have to be after lunch tomorrow," she began slowly. "Why can't this wait?"

"I'm getting married on Saturday. It took a hell of a time trying to find you the last three months," Draco said wiping his mouth.

"How did you find me?" she asked softly as Lois yawned.

"Tracking system," he said as he looked at her face. "Your wand's serial number and two very gifted Gryffindor Ministry workers. You used your wand for the first time in at least six months; we were able to track it."

Hermione remembered the repairing spell she had used on the computer the night before. She took a deep breath.

"Wow, well," Jon said getting up. "Maybe Draco can come in with you to help with the clean up? The sooner the room gets done, the faster you can get to the Ministry building to sign those papers. Besides, you two have a lot of things to catch up on."

Hermione flushed noticeably. She looked at Draco as she stood up.

"Yes, that sounds like a plan," Draco said standing as well.

"Really, I'm sure you'd rather spend your morning getting in some sightseeing or something. I can always meet up with you at the Ministry," she said as she placed the dirty dishes in the sink.

"No. I think your husband's right," he said not noticing that Hermione cringed at the mention of her fake marriage. "The sooner we get things done at your Muggle school, the sooner we can get those papers signed. The sooner I can leave you in peace."

"So, Draco, have you a place to stay tonight?" Jon asked as Hermione pulled Lois out of her booster seat.

"I'll probably check into a Wizarding hotel," Draco said.

"It's nearly ten, Draco," Jon said. "We have an extra room. Why don't you bed here?"

Draco nodded, "That does make things convenient."

"Then it's settled," Jon said triumphantly.

"Honey," Hermione said as she gripped Jon's elbow. "I'll need your help to get the linen for Malfoy's room."

Jon smiled at his housemate as she led him to her room. She closed the door behind her, placed Lois on the bed and quickly went to the nightstand. She placed her index finger on her mouth signaling for Jon to be quiet. She took hold of her wand and said a silencing spell.

"What the hell was that about?" she almost roared.

"Hermione, calm down," Jon said amused. "It was the right thing to do and you know it."

She threw her hands up in the air. He was right. She turned to her daughter.

"Kiddo, you're gonna have to sleep in my room for a few more nights okay."

She nodded before heading for the bathroom to brush her teeth. The older witch picked up the wand again and uttered the ending spell, *Finite incantatum*. She stood up, grabbed an extra blanket and followed Jon out.

Draco sat on the couch opposite the large box. Jon turned it on. Noise and picture flashed on the screen. It was ESPN Sportscenter relaying the sports happenings of the day. "Television," Jon said as he watched. "A.K.A. boob tube. Great Muggle device."

Draco nodded as they watched the highlights of English football. Hermione was trying her best to make the room that Lois was going to move into decent looking for the likes of Draco Malfoy. She placed the blanket on the twin-sized bed and sighed. 'This is only for one night,' she thought.

They all watched as the young footballer bent the ball into the back of the goal. Even Draco was impressed at the muggle athlete.

"Room's ready," she said. The two young wizards turned to face her. "It's far smaller than the rooms at Malfoy manor, but it's livable."

Draco stood up. "I'm sure it will be fine," he said walking past her into the smallish room. "What time should I be up and ready to go?"

"I'm leaving the house at around 7 a.m. Breakfast is between 6 and 6:30 if you're hungry," she said leaving the two men.

"She loves to get up early, doesn't she," Draco said aloud.

"Yup," Jon said as he turned toward his room before stopping and then headed in the direction of Hermione's room. "See you tomorrow, Draco."

Draco watched as Jon entered the master bedroom. He narrowed his eyes thinking about the two of them in the next room in the same bed. He shut the door behind him. He sighed as

he removed his robe, shirt, pants, socks and shoes leaving him only in his boxers. He ran his hand through his hair as he lay in the small bed, welcoming the end to a long day.

Chapter 17

Tuesday clean up

8 Jun. Tues. 0715 (7:15 a.m.) HST

"I'll sit in the back with Lois," Jon smirked as he finished strapping Lois into her chair.

Hermione didn't know what to say as she watched her housemate buckle himself into the seat next to her daughter. She sighed as she entered her side of the dark blue Chevy Impala. She turned to see Draco still outside of the car looking slightly hopeless. Hermione rolled her eyes at him.

She opened his door from the lever on the inside. He sat down.

"You'll have to buckle up," Hermione said as she, too, put her seatbelt on.

He looked at her blankly. She rolled her eyes. Jon sat amused as he watched the young couple in the front of the car.

Hermione reached over Draco and pulled the belt over his chest. They both breathed in. She locked the belt in place and turned to face front concentrating on the steering wheel.

"I don't understand why we have to be strapped in," he said bitingly.

Hermione sighed, "Muggle laws, Draco. Just like those in the Wizarding world, we Muggles have to follow laws too."

She started the car. Draco rolled his eyes. Hermione pulled out of the driveway. They all sat listening to the radio as Hermione drove to the high school.

O-O-O

They all walked to Hermione's classroom. Jon kissed her on the cheek playing up their little charade. Hermione was a little surprised, but then smiled. "I'll see you at home," Jon said, as he was going to meet his *friend* Mike at his classroom.

Hermione nodded. Jon pulled Lois up into his arms. He hugged her. "Hey, keep an eye on your mom, okay," he smiled joking.

Hermione flushed. Draco's ears started to burn as well. Lois kissed her uncle on the cheek before Jon placed her on the ground. He waved to the small family before leaving for his own room two buildings away.

O-O-O

She opened up the classroom and flipped the light switch. She breathed in as Lois rushed past her. Draco brushed against Hermione's back as he got his first glimpse at his wife's classroom. She took another deep breath.

"This is my classroom," she said looking up at him.

He nodded. He smiled at her sincerely, "It's brighter than Snape's was."

She actually laughed. He smiled at her.

"What first, Mommy?" the little girl asked.

Hermione nodded. "Hm, why don't you help me wipe off the chairs starting from the back of the room? Mommy and," she paused before she said anything she was going to regret, "and Mr. Malfoy are going to wash beakers out."

The little girl nodded. Hermione headed for the sinks at the front of the room. Draco watched the little girl obey her mother and head to the back. Draco sighed. He followed Hermione. She was already stacking dirty beakers on the side of the main sink.

"So did you use the *Imperius* on Diego?" Draco asked half joking.

"Stop being a prat, Malfoy," she said, looking at him.

"You could never take a joke, could you?" he said snidely.

"No," she said softly, her eyes starting to water. She turned towards the sink to avoid his gaze. "Especially when it's at my expense."

Draco shut his eyes. Why did she always make him want to bait her? "So what spell did you use?" he asked as he joined her at the sink. He watched her take a breath as she started to wash out beakers.

"*Reparo*," she said as she rinsed the last beaker. She looked at him. He watched her exhale.

"Lois accidentally spilt fruit punch on my personal laptop Sunday evening," she said as he looked questioningly at her thighs not understanding her Muggle meaning.

"A computer; a data storage system," she said. "The last day of school was yesterday. Our marks were on the computer. We owed it to the kids to show them what they got for the term."

"The juice basically short circuited everything. It was fried," she took a deep breath. "I don't think a Muggle repairperson could have helped anyway. I had no other choice."

He smiled a little, easing the tension. "Saved me from declaring you dead," he said.

"Gee, thanks," she said. He laughed. She joined in.

"So you're getting married on Saturday," she said softly, looking into his face. Her breath caught in her chest. She looked away, pretending to be interested in what her daughter was doing. "So who's the lucky Muggle-born?"

"We uh," he began, studying her profile. "We repealed the Marriage Laws last June."

She turned back to face him. She gave him a weak smile. "So who's the lucky Pure-blood witch then?" she blushed, chiding herself inwardly for being so affected.

He squinted at her then ran his fingers through his hair. He took a deep breath. He looked away, "Celeste Profesi."

There was a long pause as if Hermione were collecting her thoughts. She breathed in. "Blonde, blue eyed, fashion model. Wealthy family," she said as if reading from a rap sheet.

"I guess your parents are quite happy about the merger."

He looked at her, his face intense and slightly flushed. She gulped, "I didn't mean anything by that," she said apologetically.

His look softened a little, "She has qualities all her own, Granger."

"I know, Malfoy," she said. "I just meant," she stumbled over words.

With a weak smile, she looked into his face and said softly, "I'm happy for you."

She saw his shoulders rise and fall as he took a breath. She herself took in a breath trying to think of something to say to change the subject.

"So how big a wedding are you expecting?" she asked not able to look at him.

"Seven thousand," he said laughing. "If Celeste gets her way, there'll be 10 by Saturday morning."

They both laughed. The little girl watched the two adults intently as she pretended to organize the rocks that her mother used for her short geology lesson on how they tied in with chemistry.

"I take it the ceremony will be at Malfoy Manor?" she asked not looking at him.

"Yeah, on the back patio," he said glancing at her. He watched her bite her lower lip.

"Dean's my Best Man," he said.

She smiled at Draco. She had always thought Dean Thomas to be a great guy.

"He and Ginny are married," he continued to gaze at her.

Hermione was speechless for a moment. Then she smiled to herself. "Since when?" she asked, curious.

"About a year and a half ago," he said. "Ginny asked him. Muggle Marriage Laws were still in effect. They're pregnant."

"Really?" he saw her eyes twinkle.

"Yeah, she's expecting next month," he said breathing. He laughed, "They've already got the kid's name picked out, Ronda."

"A girl?"

"Yeah," he smiled at her interest. "They're naming her after that git brother of hers."

"Malfoy!" she admonished.

He smiled holding his hands up, pretending to protect himself from her. "Sorry, I forgot you two were an item."

She looked down at her hands. Draco wanted to kick himself.

"He was a good guy," Hermione said softly. She looked up at him, "A good friend."

“Granger,” he looked at her, his eyes piercing. He couldn’t believe he was going to ask this. But he needed to know. “If he were alive, and if he had asked you to marry him before we got together, would you have accepted?”

She took in a deep breath. She looked back at him. She gulped. “It would have been like marrying my own brother. He was my best friend. We both agreed things wouldn’t work out.”

He nodded understanding what she was trying to say. “They miss you, you know,” he said to her.

Her breath caught in her throat, thinking about the red headed younger witch and the Half-blood wizard. She turned to the sink again, as she blinked rapidly, keeping tears at bay, “Well, we should really start cleaning up if we want to get out of here in time.”

Draco nodded and actually rolled up his sleeves to help wipe down counters. She watched him for a moment before continuing her task.

They cleaned for a good three hours. Hermione had turned the radio on. Draco watched out of the corner of his eye as Hermione danced to the upbeat Muggle music.

They heard a knock on the open door. A tall girl walked in. Lois ran to her.

“Jaci,” the toddler squealed.

“Hey, how’s my favorite two year old?” the dark haired graduated senior asked as she picked up the little girl.

“Good,” the youngster said as she played with the older girl’s digital camera that hung on a strap around her neck.

“Hey, Jaci,” Hermione said hugging her now former student. “Can’t get enough of this place, can you?”

The former volleyball player laughed. “Just stopped by to say, ‘bye,’ before heading to Yale,” she said as she smiled at her teacher’s male visitor.

Draco watched the exchange of pleasantries. He never remembered Hogwarts professors as candid and informal with their students. It was actually refreshing to see.

“So who’s your blonde haired hottie, Ms. Granger?” the young girl asked teasingly as she placed her teacher’s daughter on the ground. Hermione flushed. Draco smiled.

Hermione cleared her throat. “Jaci Mayat,” she said looking at her student, “This is an old friend of mine from the U.K., Draco Malfoy. Mr. Malfoy, this is Jaci, one of my better students.”

The two shook hands. Jaci nodded at her teacher as she noticed Mr. Malfoy’s eyes. She looked over at Lois and then smiled.

Hermione noticed her perceptive student’s action. She took a deep breath.

“Well,” Jaci said breathing in as she fingered her camera. “I just wanted to tell you, ‘thank you,’ for everything the last three years. I know I was a handful in the beginning.”

Hermione gave the young lady another hug. Draco watched this exchange, smiling to himself. Hermione really was a very good teacher.

"You had better e-mail me," Hermione said. "I'd like to hear all the gossip from the hallowed Ivy League halls."

"Will do," the younger woman said. "Hey, how 'bout a picture? I have to use up the whole memory card anyway."

"Oh, really, Jaci," Hermione began.

"Aw come on, Ms. Granger," she smiled. "How 'bout one so that Mr. Malfoy can have a memento of his visit."

Hermione turned to Draco. He shrugged. Hermione inwardly groaned. She turned to Jaci, "Okay. Where do you want us?"

"Right there is fine," she said as they took their seats. Jaci quickly picked Lois up and without warning placed her gently on Draco's lap. Hermione was about to protest. Draco was slightly taken aback.

"Alright," Jaci said, "Say cheese on three."

She took the photo with the three smiling. Great family photo, she thought. "I'll e-mail you the picture, Ms. Granger," she said, breathing in triumphantly. "I've still got two other teachers to go bother."

"Okay," Hermione said, speechless as they watched her student walk out of the door.

"She seems like a nice kid," Draco said looking at Hermione.

"Hmm," she said still wondering whether her student guessed her secret. "Yeah, she is."

"You love this job, don't you?" he said smiling at her.

"Yes," she answered truthfully.

"Mommy?" the little girl tugged at her mother's jeans.

"Yes, dear," Hermione said looking down at grey eyes.

"I'm hungry," Lois said.

Hermione looked at Draco. He nodded. Hermione turned back to Lois, "How about McDonald's?"

The young girl nodded as she placed her small hand into the wizard's palm. Draco took a deep breath. Hermione blinked.

"We'd better go if we want to get to sign those papers after lunch," she said breathlessly.

Draco nodded. He squeezed the little girl's hand, smiled and walked out of the cleaned classroom. Hermione shut her eyes. This was going to be a very long lunch break.

O-O-O

“Should we have invited your husband?” Draco asked as he watched her pull Lois from her car seat.

Hermione breathed in as they exited the car. “Jon had a lot to clean up,” she said. Jon was actually going to have lunch with Michael.

They looked at the menu board. Draco had no clue what kind of establishment this was.

“What’s good?” he whispered in her ear.

She breathed in. “Fat and grease, lots of sugar,” Hermione joked. “Everything is good.”

“I’ll have whatever you’re having then,” he said as he looked at the rather intimidating menu board.

Hermione sighed. She looked at the cashier. “One four piece chicken McNugget Happy Meal, barbecue sauce, with apples and milk. Two Quarter Pounder with cheese meals with Diet Cokes as drinks, please,” she looked at Draco to see if that was okay. “Also, three taro pies.”

The young cashier punched the order in and collected the money. The three waited for their order on the side.

“It’s pretty busy,” Draco said as he noted the long line that had formed behind them.

“Yeah. Lunchtime and all,” Hermione said as she looked up at him. He pushed up against her as several customers went by them. They both exhaled.

“Orders up,” the runner said to Hermione. Hermione finally got her bearings straight. She turned and thanked the runner. She took hold of the full tray.

“I’ll get the utensils?” Draco offered.

“Uh, napkins and straws are right there, Malfoy,” she said nodding her head toward the small counter.

Hermione led her companions to a table in the middle of the dining room. Draco sat. Hermione sat as well and pulled Lois onto her lap. Draco watched the young mother kiss her daughter on the forehead before pulling out the food from the package that Hermione had called a Happy Meal.

Hermione opened up the nuggets and the barbecue sauce. She opened up the half-pint of 1% milk and opened up the apples and caramel sauce. She then nodded at Draco as she took a swig of her diet soda.

He looked down at the food that was wrapped in paper. He took a sip of his drink. He shuddered at first, having to get used to the taste. He watched her unwrap her sandwich and take a bite.

He did the same and nodded. “This is a good sandwich,” he said.

“It’s called a hamburger,” she said as she ate two fries.

“Well whatever it is, it’s good,” he smiled. “It’s probably really bad for me though, huh.”

She laughed. "Live a little, Malfoy. I'm sure you'll still be able to fit in your dress robes come Saturday."

Draco nodded slowly as he watched her look down. She turned to face her daughter who was enjoying her piece of chicken, rather slowly.

The threesome ate quietly for a while. Draco ate the last of his burger as he watched the little brown haired toddler lick her fingers free of the caramel sauce for the apples.

The little girl looked just like her mother. Her dark brown hair fell in curls a little past her shoulders. The toddler smiled up at her mother. The older witch smiled back. Draco took a breath. The little girl took a swig of her half pint and then wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. Hermione couldn't help but laugh. She looked up at Draco who had a smile on his lips.

Draco averted Hermione's eyes. "So, Lois," Draco asked the little girl, "What do you guys do for fun around here?"

The little girl canted her head at Draco. She nodded, "We go to the beach, play at the park, have picnic at the small park, too."

Draco looked up at Hermione. "Sounds like fun," Draco said. "So how old are you, Lois?"

"I'm this much," she said as she held up two fingers.

"Well, you're very smart for this much," he said as he held up his fingers, too. The little girl smiled.

"She takes after her father," Hermione said as she ruffled her daughter's hair.

"I'm sure you had something to say for that, too," he nodded at his former classmate.

He turned to the little girl, "And you're very well spoken as well."

The young girl nodded her head and smiled, "You too."

Hermione laughed and then kissed her daughter on the head again. Hermione shrugged at her ex-husband. Draco couldn't help laughing either.

"You almost done, Kiddo?" Hermione asked as she wiped her daughter's mouth with a napkin.

"Mhm," the little girl said as she jumped off Hermione's lap. She helped to put all her trash in a neat pile on the tray. Hermione stood up and Draco did as well.

"We'd better start out if we want to get to the Ministry before it closes," she said.

Draco pulled the little girl up into his arms without a second thought. Hermione's breath caught in her chest.

"Lois, Mommy and," Hermione said as she threw the trash into the bin. "Mr. Malfoy have to run some errands. You behave for Grandma Celia, okay."

Draco had placed the little girl into the car seat as deftly as any seasoned parent would have. He smiled to the little girl who smiled back. He joined Hermione in the front of the car, buckling his seat belt by himself. Hermione inwardly smiled.

O-O-O

“Jon won’t be able to watch her?” Draco asked as they pulled into the driveway.

Hermione breathed in as Draco was already heading for the back seat. He pulled the sleeping child out of the seat and rested her on his chest as he carried her. Hermione again took in a deep breath.

“He’s probably still at school,” Hermione said. “I can take her.”

“It’s all right. I’ve got her,” he smiled at her disarmingly.

Hermione turned and headed towards her neighbor’s front door. She had to take several breaths to calm down. She knocked on the door as Draco joined her on the porch.

“Hi, Celia,” Hermione said.

“Ah, Hermione,” the older woman said giving her neighbor a hug. She smiled at Hermione’s gentleman companion.

“Celia Rodriguez,” Hermione said as she breathed in. She looked square into her older neighbor’s eyes and chose her words wisely. “This is Draco Malfoy, my ex-husband. We have to take care of some paperwork. Would you mind?”

She didn’t even get a chance to finish her question. “Of course not, dear,” Mrs. Rodriguez held her arms out. Draco hesitantly handed the sleeping girl over to her babysitter.

“I’ll be back to pick her up before dinner,” Hermione said thanking the older woman with her eyes. The older woman nodded her head.

20

Chapter 18

They drove to the travel point where they would enter the Wizarding world. They exited the bar that was the entranceway to the magical world. She took in a breath. The streets were full of robed wizards and witches bustling here and there.

Draco led her to the large official looking building that he had reconned the location before heading to find Hermione the night before. Hermione read the sign next to the building entrance: Ministry of Magic, O'ahu, Hawai'i.

Draco ushered her in, "Let's get this over with."

Hermione walked past several witches who stared at her curiously. Draco put her arm around her waist as he ushered her down to the family services wing. She breathed in.

They knocked on the door to the family services offices. Hermione tried the door. It was locked. She looked at Draco.

"Oh, they closed a couple of hours ago," the passerby said. "Taking a training day off, I guess."

"Closed?" Draco said icily.

"Will they hold hours tomorrow?" Hermione asked the helpful passerby politely.

He smiled, "Yes, I think so."

"You wouldn't happen to know their hours, would you?" she asked giving him her best smile.

He smiled, almost blushed, "8:30 to 4 p.m."

"Thanks," Hermione said as she nodded at the young man.

"I can't believe this!" Draco muttered under his breath.

"Yelling at that young man wouldn't have gotten us anywhere," she said as she started to walk towards the exit.

Draco grabbed at her forearm and turned her around. She looked up at him, narrowing her eyes. He threw his hands up in the air as he walked past her.

"So what happens now?" she asked as she caught up to him as they exited the building.

"I'm going to check into a hotel," he said haughtily as he headed down the street.

Hermione shut her eyes and then walked quickly to catch up. "Look, Malfoy. The room is still available."

"No thank you," Draco said looking at her. "I wouldn't want to disrupt the romance in the house."

Hermione blinked. "What the hell does that supposed to mean?" she asked as she got in front of him.

"She's two. When was she born?" he asked looking into her eyes. He took a breath.

"March 21st," she said softly.

He walked past her and entered the lobby of the rather expensive looking hotel. "I guess you got our marriage out of your system quite quickly," he said in a sharp whisper leaving her in the middle of the lobby as he approached the front desk.

She looked at him, blinking rapidly. She approached him to pursue their conversation. How dare he imply that she was some slut!

The front desk clerk raised his eyebrows at the brunette witch who had joined the famous wizard. He smiled and handed the room keys to Draco, as he knew who the blonde wizard was. He had also known that the young wizard was to marry the famous fashion model soon. It was the talk of the Wizarding world. His companion, though, didn't resemble the witch in those magazines.

The blonde wizard turned on the shorter witch and addressed her in a curt tone, "You will meet me here tomorrow morning, Granger, so we can get this over with."

The young witch looked at him incredulously. Then the two looked at the clerk who quickly turned to the porters as if he weren't paying attention to the little spat that was about to begin in front of him.

"We are not on the Malfoy Estate, nor are we in the Manor. You cannot lock me up in your tower, Malfoy," her voice escalating.

He quickly took hold of her elbow and led her towards the lift. "Let me go," she said softly yet harshly as she tried to wriggle out of his grasp.

"You're making a scene, Granger," he said turning her to face him. By now, the once bustling lobby was at a stand still as onlookers watched the arguing couple. Draco could feel their eyes on them.

He quickly pulled his wand out and before Hermione could protest he had apparated them out of the lobby, not waiting for the lift to take them up the ten floors. They found themselves in front of room 1011. She finally got out of his grasp. They stared each other down.

"Would it kill you to set aside one hour tomorrow morning to get this paperwork done, Granger?" he finally spat out.

"No," Hermione hesitated for a split second, "No, Malfoy, it wouldn't. I never said I wouldn't come with you to sign those damn papers!

"You've always been this way," she said throwing her hands in the air.

"What?" Draco asked exasperated.

"You don't ask politely! You say it as if you're mandating it! The world doesn't revolve around you," she said as she turned to leave him in front of his hotel room.

He grabbed her upper arm, a bit gruffly. She winced as he turned her to face her. He took in a sharp breath as he realized that he had hurt her. He shut his eyes for a moment as he loosened his grip.

"Hermione, I'm sorry," he said softly looking into her eyes. It was her turn to take in a deep breath.

"I just want what you've got," he said as he saw her take a step back out of his grip. "I want a family, a wife to speak with at the dinner table. I want to teach my son..."

"Or daughter," Hermione looked up at him.

"Or daughter, how to maneuver the broom in Quidditch. I want to teach them how to duel. I want to, I want . . ."

"To teach them how to hate Mudbloods?" she asked him, her eyes suddenly starting to gloss over.

"That isn't fair, Hermione," he said taking a step back himself. "I haven't used that word in years."

"You stopped fraternizing with Muggle-borns like me?" she said, and then looked down suddenly ashamed.

"I've changed over the years. If there's anybody who could understand that, I thought it would have been a Gryffindor like you. Good day, Hermione," he said looking into her brown eyes before turning.

"Draco, wait," she said as she touched the small of his back. Draco stopped, his eyes fluttering at the feel of her fingertips through his clothing. He took a deep breath.

Hermione quickly pulled her hand away as if she had had a bad touch. He turned to face her. He watched her nervously wring her hands. She looked up into the familiar grey eyes.

"I guess I let our shared past dictate my thoughts, Draco. I know you've changed. I could see it when we were together for those three months. You weren't the same obnoxious prat from our Hogwarts years," she smiled shyly.

Draco let out a sincere laugh. She joined in. They both took big breaths.

"I really am happy for you, Draco. You and Celeste were *the couple* at Hogwarts. That morning in front of the Cauldron, I told you that I hope you find that one true someone. Things have worked themselves out, Draco," she said, giving him a weak smile. "You found your match."

"I'm just sorry you had to wait this long," she said not able to look into his eyes. "Draco, if I had known."

"Hermione," he interrupted, gently touching her arm. A tingling sensation ran up her arm at his touch. She gulped. "It's all right, Hermione."

She took a step back, giving a toothless smile. "I'll meet you in the lobby tomorrow morning at eight."

He nodded at her as she turned to walk away. He watched the lift doors close on her. He looked up to the ceiling before entering his room. Hermione shut her eyes as she pressed the 1st floor button. She bit nervously on her lower lip as she watched the numbers descend. The ride down was a long one.

Chapter 19

dream reprisal

8 Jun. Tues 2345 (11:45 p.m.) HST

Draco sat on the comfortable hotel bed as he finished reading the article on the much anticipated wedding that Saturday in the Daily Prophet. He sighed as he placed the paper on the nightstand. He had owed Dean that he more than likely would be back in London by the end of the next day.

Draco reflected on the events of the past three years without seeing hide nor hair of her. He inhaled deeply as he thought of the moment when he saw his “wife” for the first time since leaving the café. He also remembered how the new couple interacted with each other. He huffed. Then he smiled to himself as he thought of the little brown haired youngster. There was no doubt that she was Hermione’s daughter; quite smart for a two-year old. He took another deep breath noting how the child didn’t even resemble Diego one bit.

‘Why should he care about who she was with now? Life goes on, Draco,’ he thought. He sighed again.

With a wave of his wand, the room darkened. He turned on his side as he shut his eyes. He reached for the rope chain and touched the small cylindrical object that rested against his chest. His eyes fluttered as he gave way to sleep.

* * *

He turned the corner and immediately knew where he was. This time he heard the rain outside drop harder as he made his way to the Great Hall. He moved towards the balcony where he knew he would find them.

The brown haired witch caught the blonde witch in a tackle. They landed on the ground. Celeste pulled her wand out and aimed the *Cruciatus* curse at her opponent. Hermione writhed in pain.

Celeste was centimeters from her former classmate’s face. “Now, Mudblood, you die,” she said putting the wooden stick under her chin.

Hermione looked up into her face. She shut her eyes. Then with no warning, she summoned what little strength she had left and brought her fist up and connected with the blonde haired witch’s nose, effectively breaking it.

“Bitch,” the injured witch wailed. She recovered quicker than the prone witch. She raised her wand and cursed her again with the second Unforgivable Curse.

Hermione wailed in agony. Her back arched and then slammed into the solid rock underneath her. She breathed hard, blinking back tears.

“*Finite incantatum*,” a deep voice yelled. Draco held his wand and aimed at his ex-wife. He then aimed it at his fiancée who narrowed her eyes at him. “*Stupefy!*”

The blonde witch was thrown into the low wall that protected any wayward bystanders from falling to their deaths. She slumped to the base of the wall unconscious. Draco rushed towards the brunette witch.

“Are you all right?” he asked as he knelt in front of her.

She reared backwards into the wall. She looked at him with a hint of fear. She breathed hard. “Stay away from me,” she stammered.

“I’m not going to hurt you, Hermione,” he said as he reached out. He knew this was a dream, and that this Hermione only knew that the war was still going on.

“Why did you call me that?” she asked, her eyes growing wider as she took in a pained breath.

“The effects of *Cruciatius* are quite lasting,” he said as he closed the distance between them. He took hold of her robes bringing her into his body. She couldn’t struggle out of his grip even if she wanted to. She was weak from the two doses of the painful curse. “I need to get you to Madame Pomfrey.”

“Why are you helping me?” she asked as she leaned against his chest.

He didn’t answer her. He didn’t know himself why he was doing it, let alone why he was dreaming all of this.

“Come on,” he said as he stood up about to bring her into his arms to carry her.

“I can walk on my own,” she said getting up and taking a step backward into the short wall. She looked into his eyes. She gulped as she realized they didn’t look as menacing as she remembered them to be in school.

“You have to get out of here, Draco,” she said looking at him. “They’ll catch you and throw you into Azkaban. Hogwarts isn’t a place for Death Eaters.”

“I’m not a Death Eater, Hermione,” he said, his voice sounding defeated.

She looked at his exposed forearm. He looked down to see the serpent slither out of the skull. “Hermione,” he said reaching for her face, touching it gently.

Her eyes suddenly grew large. Was she frightened of him touching her so? He suddenly was pushed out of the way. Boy was she angry with him, he thought as he fell to the ground. He looked up to see her knees start to buckle as the blue-eyed witch re-cocked her arm ready to plunge the dagger into the brunette witch again. Draco moved quickly as he yelled the disarming spell, “*Expelliarmus!*”

Celeste backed into the wall, the dagger falling down the cliff. She quickly pulled her wand out and aimed it at him. “Traitor,” she yelled as the rain came down. Before she could utter the killing curse, he shouted another disarming spell followed by a stunning spell. She lost her balance and fell over the wall. Draco breathed hard. He wasn’t concerned that his fiancée fell the hundred meters to the water and jagged rocks below.

He quickly went to the wounded witch’s side. He gathered her into his arms, allowing her back to rest against his thigh. With one hand, he applied pressure to the wound. He knew

what kind of dagger the blonde witch had used, one whose inflicted wounds would never stop bleeding.

The dark haired witch trembled as she looked up into his grey eyes. He moved a strand of hair from her face. Her breathing was erratic.

"You have to get out of here, Draco," she said taking in small short breaths. "They'll throw you into Azkaban for sure, now."

"I need to get you to Madame Pomfrey this very moment," he said as he made a move to get up.

He stopped suddenly as she touched his face, leaving a streak of her blood on his pale cheek. She was already starting to feel cold. She was getting paler by the minute as her blood loss continued. "Please leave, Draco," she cried softly. "You have to . . . You have to let me go."

"No," he said as he wiped her cheek. He gulped. "Why did you do that? That dagger was meant for me."

She couldn't stop a sob from escaping her lips. "I couldn't let you die, Draco."

Her eyes fluttered. She took in one last breath. She looked up at him and then she said in a soft voice, "I love you."

Blood spilled from the side of her mouth, as she lay limp. Draco's eyes enlarged. "No! NO!" he screamed as he pulled her into his chest in an embrace. He looked up to the sky, before frantically looking around. He began to yell, "Help me, somebody! Somebody help me!"

Draco shot up in bed, grabbing for his wand. He uttered the lighting spell, *lumos*. He looked at his palms as if he could still feel the thick red plasma on them from her wound. 'It was just a dream,' he thought to himself as his breathing started to stabilize.

"What the hell was that all about?" he had asked himself aloud as he laid back into the bed. He ran his hand through his hair as he noticed it read 5 a.m. on his wristwatch.

"It's almost over," he told himself as he took hold of the gold band on the chain. He breathed as he shut his eyes again, trying to go back to sleep.

A smile crept onto his lips as he saw her face. He saw her lovely smile. Her long hair framed her face. He looked deeply into her deep chocolate colored eyes. He sighed as he again fell asleep.

* * *

7 Hours earlier

Hermione kissed her daughter's forehead. She tucked her into bed.

"You packed all your things for the camping trip with Grandma Celia?"

"Mhmm," the little child nodded. "Uncle Jon helped me."

Hermione nodded. "Good night, Kiddo."

“Mommy,” the sleepy two-year old began.

“Yes, Kiddo,” the young mother asked as she pushed a strand of brown hair out of her daughter’s eyes that were getting droopier and droopier.

“Why do you and Daddy call each other by your last names?” the young girl asked yawning.

Hermione was taken aback for a moment. Then she recovered, gulping. “Honey, Mr. Malfoy isn’t,” she began to lie then stopped. She took in a deep breath.

“Lois, you can’t call him Daddy to his face, okay,” the young mother looked scared.

The grey-eyed youngster studied her mother’s face as a tear rolled down the witch’s cheek. “Okay,” the young girl hesitantly agreed.

“How did you know he was your daddy?” Hermione asked wiping the tear from her face.

“The picture in your drawer,” the young girl yawned again. “The one with everybody wearing capes.”

“Robes, Kiddo,” Hermione nodded as she finally knew to which picture her daughter was referring. The Hogwarts class picture that they had taken right before the graduation ceremonies. “Hon, there were like fifty of us in the picture.”

“He has the same eyes as me,” the girl said, as her eyelids grew heavy.

Hermione brought the young girl into her arms, hugging the perceptive youngster. She let herself cry silent tears. The youngster hardly noticed the tears drop on her shoulder as her mother rocked her to sleep. The young mother looked up to the ceiling wondering how this whole ordeal would play out.

* * *

Hermione finally walked out of her daughter’s room. She wiped her face and looked back as she turned off the light. She headed toward the kitchen.

“Hey,” Jon said as he prepared himself a sandwich. “You look like shit.”

“Thanks,” she said as she accepted the other sandwich that he had already made.

“So did you get to sign those papers?” he said taking a bite.

“We have to go in tomorrow morning,” she said looking into the English teacher’s face.

“Hey,” he said coming around to where she was standing. He put his arm around her shoulder. She leaned into him. “Everything is going to turn out, you’ve gotta believe that.”

She nodded as they both finished their sandwiches quietly. She looked up at him again. She kissed him on the cheek.

“What was that for?” he asked smiling.

“For being a good friend,” she said as she walked toward her bedroom.

“Hey, Hermione,” he called after her. She paused and turned. “What’s a gay friend for if you can’t have him pretend he’s your husband?”

Hermione shook her head and smiled back at him before entering her bedroom. She was glad to have him as a friend.

10

A.N. Thanks for the reviews.

I want to clear up some things. I did post this story on another website under dmbball73 (if you're old enough to access the website) like i mentioned at the very beginning. I'm doing some edits in this version.

Chapter 20

Wednesday

9 Jun. Wed. 0935 (9:35 a.m.) HST

The soon-to-be ex-Mrs. Malfoy and Draco Malfoy sat in the waiting room at the O'ahu offices of the Ministry of Magic. Hermione snuck a peek at her wristwatch. It was already 9:35 a.m.; they had arrived there more than an hour ago.

Draco turned the pages of the Wizarding fashion magazine he had picked up from the coffee table in the room. He flipped through it unconsciously skimming over the pictures of beautiful wizards and witches showing off whatever was in fashion that season. He snuck a glance over at the dark haired witch seated next to him. He took in a sharp breath, not even knowing why he did it at first.

He noticed her nervously biting at her lower lip. He noted how tired she looked. She probably didn't get much sleep the night before. Her eyelids fluttered as she tried to stay awake. She turned to catch him watching her.

He quickly glanced back down at his magazine. The photo shoot was of a scantily clad blond haired beautiful model taking a sip of her beau's fire whiskey that was being advertised. Hermione glanced down at the page at which Draco was staring.

She suddenly stood up and took a breath. Draco turned the page quickly as if he were a little boy caught looking at something of an NC-17 nature. He suddenly felt silly. He smirked at the brunette witch's back and as if to spite her, he turned back to the page with his fiancée kissing her photo-shoot beau. Draco sighed.

Hermione made her way to the window and stared out. Why was it taking so long? She looked down at her ring finger on her left hand. She touched the gold wedding band and took a deep breath as she looked out of the window again.

Draco stood up and headed towards the office's administrative assistant. "Why is there such a delay?" he asked a bit brisk.

"Mr. Malfoy," the female assistant looked up into the young wizard's grey eyes. She sighed and then added breathily, "I'll go inquire what is holding up Mr. Gomez."

Hermione watched the interaction between one of Hogwarts most famous bachelors and the young secretary. She rolled her eyes as the young witch left to find her supervisor. Draco caught the tail end.

"What?" he asked, a little exasperated.

"Nothing," she answered back, turning towards the window again.

He approached her. He leaned against the glass of the window staring at her profile. She turned to face him, as his eyes seemed to burn right through her. Her skin began to flush slightly.

“Look, at least I got her to check on the hold up, alright,” he said defending the use of his charming smile. “I didn’t see you do anything to expedite matters.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. He was right, she hadn’t done a thing. She looked back down at her wedding band and made it a point to avert his eyes.

“We’re in Hawaii, Draco. Things get done,” she paused, “eventually.”

“Yes, well, I’d like to actually make it to my wedding on Saturday,” he said with a huff as he took his seat again. He roughly flipped through the pages of the magazine he had been looking at. He accidentally tore the fire whiskey ad. He shut his eyes.

“Ah,” a grey haired wizard entered the office reception area. Hermione and Draco stood up. “Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy, how are you today?”

“Well,” Draco started.

“We’re fine, Mr. Gomez,” Hermione interrupted Draco’s potential tirade. Hermione gave Draco a look. She turned back to the older wizard. “What’s the status on that paperwork, Sir?”

“We’ve been researching your case. I know it took a while,” Mr. Gomez said. The young couple looked at him anxiously. “It’s tough. We are eleven hours behind London.”

“So can we start signing, Sir,” Draco said exasperated.

“I’m terribly sorry, Mr. Malfoy. Ministry bylaws state divorce decrees must be signed in the district where the marriage took place.”

“What?” Draco was nearly catatonic. “Can’t you make an exception for once?”

Mr. Gomez shook his head. Draco raised his arms up. Hermione remained quiet.

“We’ll have to go back to London,” Draco said.

“Wait. What?” Hermione finally raised her voice.

“I’m sure you and Diego can last a couple of days without each other,” he said smirking. He noticed that she started to turn a shade of pink. He continued on. “We’re going to London. We’re going to get those papers signed by the close of this morning,” Draco said, looking at her.

“It’s nearly 9 p.m. in England. Ministry offices have been closed for the last two hours. Mr. Norris was good enough to work overtime for us. Seems he wants this case to be resolved soon as well.

“You’ll have to wait until tomorrow. I’m sorry,” Mr. Gomez shrugged.

The young couple closed their eyes in unison. Hermione turned to Draco. “I guess we’re going to London, then,” she said before stalking out of the room.

Chapter 21

Back at the Manor

9 Jun. Wed 2055 (8:55 p.m.) BST

Hermione had packed light. She held her garment bag on her shoulder. She had quickly packed underwear, sleepwear and a change of clothes for the following day: a black jacket, a silk burgundy tank top, black slacks and of course her wand.

Draco led her into the foyer of Malfoy Manor. Hermione took a breath as she looked at familiar surroundings.

"Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy," the small house elf said as he entered the foyer. "May I take your bag, Missus?"

Hermione cringed at the address. She smiled at the little elf and handed him her bag.

"Take that up to one of the guest rooms, Blorg," Draco directed as he led Hermione by the elbow, slightly forcefully, to the dining room.

Hermione wrenched her elbow from his grip as they stood in front of Draco's parents. "Draco," Lucius Malfoy said. He spotted Hermione, "Ms. Granger."

"Have a seat you two," Mrs. Malfoy said smiling and standing up to take a hold of Hermione's hand to help her to her seat. "It's so good to see you again."

All Hermione could do was smile. She looked down at her full plate. Draco began to eat. Hermione joined in.

"So I take it, this paperwork glitch has yet to be," Mr. Malfoy said after a while, looking directly at Hermione, "resolved."

"It will be over with by tomorrow morning, Father," Draco said as he glanced at Hermione.

"Good," Mr. Malfoy said taking a sip of his wine. "This union with the Profesi family is being dubbed the Wedding of the Century."

Hermione put her fork down. What little appetite she had was soon lost. Mrs. Malfoy noticed her daughter-in-law flush slightly.

Hermione wiped the corners of her mouth. She took a deep breath. "The food is as good as I remembered it to be. But, it's been a long day," she said as she stood up. "If you'll excuse me, Mrs. Malfoy, Mr. Malfoy, Draco, I think I'll turn in for the night."

With that, the young witch left the dining room table. The house elf that met them in the foyer showed up. "Ah, Mrs. Malfoy."

"Please don't call me that," Hermione said softly. The elf canted his head.

"Did the dinner not suit you, Miss?"

“It was fine, Blorg. I just wasn’t very hungry,” Hermione tried to smile. “If you will, please show me my quarters.”

“Of course, Miss,” the elf led the way.

O-O-O

Hermione looked up to see where Blorg was taking her. Her face almost fell as she recognized her surroundings. “Blorg, why are you taking me to Draco’s bedroom?”

“Mr. Malfoy’s orders, Missus Malfoy,” the little elf smiled up at her.

“Blorg. Why would Draco order you to put my things in his room?”

“I’m sorry Mrs. Hermione,” the house elf cowered. “Master Lucius said to place your things in this wing.”

“Oh,” she said almost to herself. “He doesn’t want the rest of the manor tainted.”

The little house elf shrugged and opened Draco’s door for her. She entered the room. It didn’t look any different since the day she moved out. She sighed as Blorg excused himself and closed the door.

She looked for her garment bag. She closed her eyes. Blorg must have unpacked for her. Her outfit that she had planned to wear the next day hung neatly on the rack of the bathroom door.

She found her beige silk nightgown in the top dresser drawer. ‘Oh, why hadn’t she just brought a Gryffindor T-shirt and shorts,’ she thought.

She changed in the bathroom, neatly folding her clothes. She placed them back into her garment bag. She took a deep breath as she looked at Draco’s bed. There was no way in hell she was going to sleep in the same bed.

She pulled an emerald green silk sheet off the bed. She pulled a pillow and threw both of them on the floor. She looked at the nightstand. She picked up the familiar book and ran her palm over the tattered cover.

She made herself as comfortable as she could get on the floor. She grabbed her wand and almost laughed. She uttered the lighting spell — *lumos* as she opened to the first page of the fairy tale and read into the night losing herself in the pages.

O-O-O

Draco entered his bedroom a couple of hours after Hermione left dinner. He changed into his pajama bottoms. He was tired as he lay his head on his pillow. He turned on his stomach and reached for his other pillow.

He turned on his lamp. ‘Where the hell is my other pillow,’ he asked himself. He looked down.

‘What the hell is she doing in here?’ he asked himself as she turned on her side. He took in a breath as the silk sheet she used as a blanket pulled away from her body exposing her leg up to her thigh.

He closed his eyes. 'You are not an asshole, Draco,' he thought to himself. He picked her up gently and placed her on the bed. He pulled the blanket up to her chest. Draco looked up to the ceiling and lay over the covers. He pulled the sheet she had been using as his own blanket. 'This night is just getting longer and longer,' he thought.

Draco suddenly felt tingly. He quickly turned the other way. He had to control his breathing. 'Think of awful things,' he thought to himself as he adjusted himself painfully. He eventually fell asleep.

Chapter 22

A.N. This is when it starts getting angsty

10 Jun. Thurs. 0530 (5:30 a.m.) BST

Hermione's body clock woke her at the usual time, no matter on what continent she was. She turned and saw his sleeping face. She immediately turned red thinking something had happened the night before.

Her face softened as she saw the thin silk sheet above her covers. He'd just moved her to the bed, she thought.

She slowly got out of bed, not wanting to disturb him. It was 5:30 in the morning. He always needed his beauty sleep, she thought to herself as she went to change.

O-O-O

"Hi, Krank," Hermione said entering the large kitchen.

The kitchen staff of house elves came unnecessarily to attention. "Mrs. Malfoy," the lead chef house elf greeted her.

Hermione shut her eyes for a moment. She smiled at the chef elf. "Please call me Hermione. Besides, young Master Malfoy will be remarrying on Saturday. You'll get to call his new wife that."

"How can we be of service, Ms. Hermione?" Krank smiled back.

"Can I help in here?" she said looking around the kitchen.

"Oh, dear, Ms. Hermione. You are Draco's guest."

Hermione couldn't help laughing. "Really Krank. I don't mind. I can help with breakfast."

"Yes. I remembered your culinary skills, Miss," the house elf said as he handed her an apron. "They are still buzzing about your soup from three years ago."

Hermione blushed. "So what's on the menu?" she asked as she tied the apron on.

"Waffles and breakfast sausage, fruit and coffee."

"I could help with the waffles if you'd like?"

"Sure thing, Ms. Hermione."

O-O-O

"Ah, Hermione, I thought I'd find you in here," Mrs. Malfoy smiled warmly.

"Mrs. Malfoy," Hermione said, standing up.

“Hermione, please.”

“I was just catching up on some reading, Mum.”

“Krank tells me you helped out with breakfast today.”

“Yes.”

“Well, let’s head down. Breakfast is ready for us.”

“Actually, Mum, I ate with the kitchen staff.”

Mrs. Malfoy smiled as she squeezed her daughter-in-law’s shoulder. “We really must do some catching up; maybe after you and Draco finish with everything.”

All Hermione could do was smile at her. Mrs. Malfoy took her leave. Hermione sat back down on the plush rug and reopened the Wizarding book she had started.

O-O-O

He entered the library quietly. He saw her reading intently sitting cross-legged on the round rug.

He cleared his throat. Hermione snapped to. She stood up.

“Mum tells me you had a hand in breakfast,” Draco said, crossing his arms. “And that you ate with the help.”

Hermione took in a breath and fought the urge to roll her eyes. “What does it matter, Draco? You should see them at work some time. They’re amazing.”

Draco smirked, “The staff is there to do what they need to. That’s their job. I am not going to do something as trivial as watch servants do as they are supposed to do. Thank Merlin neither Celeste nor I would ever be caught dead dealing with cooks or servants in their element.”

“I guess you two deserve each other, then,” Hermione said walking towards the doorway.

He grabbed a hold of her upper arm. She flashed her wand.

He smirked. “We’ll apparate to the Ministry building from here.”

She held her head high breathing deeply. He let up on his grip. They apparated.

5

Chapter 23

10 Jun. Thurs. 0900 (9:00 a.m.) BST

Draco drummed on his shirtfront, tapping the fabric over the thin cylindrical wedding band he wore on the silver rope chain around his neck. He snuck a peek at Hermione who had her eyes shut. He took in a deep breath as the thought of how beautiful she looked crossed his mind.

He quickly looked away as she opened her eyelids. He stood up abruptly heading towards the counter. "What the hell is taking so long? I thought this waiting thing would have ended in Hawaii."

Hermione rolled her eyes at his comment. It was her turn to fidget with her wedding band. She pulled it to the tip of her ring finger and twirled it slowly. Draco watched her do this. He returned to his seat.

"So what are you planning to do after," Draco asked sincerely as he locked eyes with her.

She took in a breath before she replied, "After we sign the divorce papers?"

It was Draco's turn to take in a breath, "Yeah."

She stopped twirling the gold band and replaced it at the base of her finger. "I'm not sure."

"You should stay awhile. Say, 'hi,' to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. Dean and Ginny would hex me if they thought I kept you from visiting them before you left."

Hermione took a moment to answer. "I really . . . I really don't feel up to seeing them just yet," she said with a slight hitch. "This was a business trip, Draco."

"Business trip?" he smirked.

"I don't think I can face them, right now," she said looking him in the eyes. "Besides, I don't want to get in the way this weekend; what with all the wedding festivities going on."

Draco became slightly paler than he usually was. He quickly recovered, "Going back then?"

"Yeah," she said weakly. "Lois will be waiting."

He had observed the two during his short stay with the couple. Something didn't seem right. He looked back at Hermione, canting his head. "And Jon," Draco added observing her reaction.

"Yes," she gulped.

He narrowed his eyes at her for a moment and then softened his glare as he saw her eyes water. He gently took hold of her left hand, caressing her ring finger.

"You two aren't really married, are you?" he asked, a little more hopeful than sure of himself, his eyes piercing through hers.

She shut her eyes as a tear rolled down her cheek. He wiped it gently away. She took in a sharp breath. He continued, "He's not her father is he?"

She looked at him wide eyed, "No." She looked down, afraid that he had put two and two together.

"Do I know him?" he breathed, turning her chin up with his fingers so he could look into her eyes.

He was unaware of the truth. "It doesn't matter," she breathed almost in relief. "It's not your problem, Draco."

"Did he hurt you? Did he abuse you?" he asked.

"We both decided to go our separate ways."

"He doesn't know about her, does he?" he asked.

She gulped. She didn't know what to say for a while. "Yes he does," she answered, bending the truth.

"You two can get back together. He can help to take care of her," he said a little frantically.

Hermione stood up a little wobbly. "He has his own life, now," she said quietly, looking up at Draco as he himself stood up. "And I have mine.

"We were too different," she found it hard to breathe.

"Did you love him?"

She looked up at him. Tears welled up in her eyes again. "It doesn't matter, anymore."

"Yes it does," he said, thinking of ways to make sure that this guy owned up to his responsibilities. He asked her again, "Did you love him?"

"Yes," she said quietly.

"She means everything to me," she said looking down at her hands. "I want to do right by her. I see . . . her father in her all the time.

"She's going to be smart and athletic like him. She's a bit more humble than he is."

They both smiled. He wiped her cheek again for her.

"She has her father's eyes," she said smiling and then turned quickly away from him. A look of shock crossed her face as she kept her eyes on Mr. Norris's door.

"Why is it taking Mr. Norris so long?" she asked quietly, almost pleadingly. She hoped Draco missed her little blurt.

Meanwhile, Draco's eyes began to flash as he replayed her last statement in his head. His breathing was deep. Hermione looked straight into his eyes, knowing he had come to the correct conclusion.

They both looked up surprised as Mr. Norris' door opened up. A short bespectacled wizard in a simple set of robes entered the small waiting room.

“Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy,” the shorter, older wizard greeted them, laughing good-naturedly, “Thought I’d address you by that for the last time. Please step into my office and we’ll get to signing those papers.”

Draco locked on Hermione’s gaze before turning to the older wizard. “Could you hold that thought, Mr. Norris? I haven’t had the chance to show my wife my office yet.”

Hermione shut her eyes for a second. She looked up at Draco’s grey eyes. “We can sign those papers first, Draco,” she said almost pleadingly.

“If you’ll excuse us, Mr. Norris,” Draco took a gentle hold of Hermione’s elbow.

“Of course,” Mr. Norris smiled, “You’ve waited this long.”

Hermione looked forlorn at Mr. Norris before Draco ushered them out the door. Hermione felt as if her whole world was crashing down on her. Draco pulled her into the lift and depressed the button for the 51st floor.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a moment as the lift zipped quickly upwards. She shut her eyes, as she felt a little queasy as the speed was getting to her. Draco was used to it. He watched her; Merlin, she was beautiful, he thought. The lift stopped at the desired floor. Draco held the door open. “Hermione,” he said softly extending his hand.

Hermione reluctantly took it. He led her out to what seemed like a lobby. “This is the 51st floor lobby. The only way up to the ten penthouse offices is through here.”

He led her to another lift. He took out what appeared to be equivalent to a Muggle card key. He waved it in front of the scanner and placed his right thumb on the pad next to it. The lift doors opened. He nudged her gently into the compartment. He pressed the 10PH button.

“One actually needs one of these card keys to get up to the penthouses,” he looked at her. “You don’t need one to go down, though.”

The lift wasn’t as fast as the first one. Hermione, though, kept her eyes shut, trying to avoid Draco’s gaze. The doors finally opened to a large lobby as Hermione opened her eyes. She took in a deep breath.

Draco walked ahead of her. She almost thought about going back down without him as the doors started to close. She looked down before following him reluctantly.

There was a young wizard sitting behind a counter looking a bit anxious as he flipped through paperwork. His look brightened as he saw his supervisor enter the room. “Mr. Malfoy,” the young wizard stood up as Draco and Hermione approached the counter.

“Steven,” Draco nodded, “I want you to meet my wife, Hermione.”

“I thought you were marrying Ms. Profesi,” Steven asked as he shook Hermione’s hand.

“Ex-wife,” Hermione said.

“My wife and I,” Draco began.

“Ex-wife,” Hermione interjected weakly as Steven looked from Draco to Hermione.

Draco hid a smile, “My wife and I have a lot to talk about in my office. I don’t want us to be disturbed.”

“Uh, Mr. Malfoy, your meeting downstairs in Mr. Thomas’s office is in an hour, Sir.”

“Thanks for the reminder, Steven,” Draco said as he ushered Hermione into his office.

A.N. Thanks for the reviews!

Chapter 24

A.N. The two get *real* close in this chapter and again more angst. R/R ¡GRACIAS!

Hermione took in another breath as she looked around the immense office. She quickly turned as she heard Draco murmur a silencing charm. She heard the click of the deadbolt.

“Silencing charm, Draco?” she said, her eyes following the blonde wizard as he walked away from the doors towards his desk.

“Well,” he said. “You know how loud our arguments get.”

She couldn’t stop a tear from falling down her cheek. “We’re going to be arguing about something?”

If Draco had been facing Hermione she would have seen his signature smirk across his face. He removed his cloak and rolled up his sleeves. “We make important decisions in here all the time that affect the Wizarding World. That’s where we signed the repeal of the Muggle Marriage Laws,” he said as he pointed his wand towards the large conference table.

“There was no glitch in the paperwork, was there. When were you going to tell me?” Draco tried to sound menacing. He turned on her, wand wielded. “The marriage was sealed.”

Hermione stifled a sob, her wand hand trembled as the tip of the wand grazed the under part of Draco’s chin. The tip of Draco’s wand pressed gently into her chest. She looked up at him. His eyes softened. He took in a breath as he watched a tear roll down her cheek.

He slowly dropped his wand hand, trusting she was not going to hex him. He took a step towards her. He ran his fingers along the side of her face.

“You’re not going to really use that on me, are you?” he asked her, reaching slowly for her wand. The wand trembled before he took it gently from her. All he wanted to do was hold her in his arms.

“All we have to do is go downstairs and sign those papers, Draco,” she said softly, looking up at him. “You won’t have to deal with me ever again.”

Draco looked at her. He shook his head. He walked to his desk not knowing what to say to her for a moment. He pinched the bridge of his nose as he turned to face her, dropping both their wands on his desk. He leaned against his desk as he studied her for a while.

He suddenly reached for her jacket lapels and pulled her into him. His eyes pierced through hers and then they softened as a tear slid down her right cheek. He swooped down and captured her lips. She froze for a moment, her brown eyes growing larger. Then she gave into the kiss, allowing him to bring her closer to his body. It seemed like they held each other for an eternity.

He finally broke the kiss. They both took in large breaths. He looked at her hungrily. She unbuttoned her jacket, clumsily removing it. He tugged on her silk form fitting tank top. He had a time trying to pull it over her head. He looked at her. He tore her tank top open.

He stood waiting for a violent response. She just smiled coyly. He swooped down to kiss her again pulling her top off her and allowing it to drop at their feet. With his left arm, he pulled her in close to him again turning her against his desk. With his other arm, he cleared his desktop, essentially pushing everything off it, including their wands.

She worked to unbutton his white collared shirt. When she was done, she lay on his desk. He pulled it off along with his t-shirt. He was shirtless just like she was. He leaned over her, the circular wedding band on his silver chain acted like a pendulum swinging side to side. She looked up at him trying to control her breathing.

His hands lay on either side of her head. He, too, was trying to control his breathing. He kept eye contact, slowly lowering his face to where her neck met her left shoulder. She let out a soft moan as he kissed her skin.

He inched down to her left breast, trailing soft kisses over it. She let out another moan, in spite of herself. His hand ventured down over her midsection. He watched her reaction, waiting for her to tell him to stop. She said nothing.

He kept her eye contact. He deftly unbuttoned her slacks and pulled her zipper down. She took in a sharp breath and then gulped, never once taking her eyes off him. She allowed him gently to pull her pants down to her knees. He kissed her. She kicked her shoes off and allowed him to pull her pants all the way off.

She lifted her pelvis. He pulled her knickers off her along with her socks. She was completely naked now. He looked at her again, taking in a breath. She closed her eyes, breathing slow deep breaths.

He stripped away his clothing as well. He placed his knee in between hers, leaning over her. He kissed her forehead. She opened her eyes, seeing him naked as well. They held each other's gaze for a while. She smiled at him, giving him permission. He kissed her as he entered her, catching her moan in his mouth.

O-O-O

The silencing charm worked. Steven could not have heard a thing even if he knew his boss and his "wife" were making love. He was too busy becoming nervous about how close the time was for Mr. Malfoy's weekly progress meeting; this time in Mr. Thomas's office one floor below. Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy were talking for nearly an hour.

O-O-O

"I love you," Draco whispered as he gave one final thrust and then collapsed on her, kissing her shoulder. Hermione couldn't keep her eyes open for a while. Her breathing finally slowed as Draco gently rolled off her. She lay on her side facing him.

He turned to face her, watching her trying to control her breathing, her eyelids fluttering. "Are you all right?" he asked, moving a strand of hair away from her face.

She took a deep breath. She looked up at him and smiled, "Yes," she said weakly.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?" he asked concerned as he saw her trembling.

She shook her head, giving him a weak smile. "No, it's just . . ." she looked up at him. "It's been a long time."

Draco touched her face and smiled gently. "How long?" he asked softly.

She colored slightly; she took another breath, "Let's just say that, if we're really still in a marriage, then I've been true to it."

Draco looked at her and smiled. How could he have ever let her slip away?

He watched Hermione's face turn. He gulped.

"Oh, God," she said turning away from him. She quickly sat up. Draco's eyes enlarged.

"What the hell have we done?" she asked as she started to gather up her clothing. Draco shot up to a sitting position, as he watched her try to dress quickly.

"Hermione," Draco said, grabbing for his pants. "We didn't do anything wrong."

She just looked at him as she picked up her torn tank top. She pulled on her jacket. She shoved the pieces of her tank top into one of her jacket pockets.

"You're getting married on Saturday, Draco," Hermione said, pulling on her socks and shoes. A tear slipped down her cheek. 'This,' she said waving her hands at his desk, "was wrong."

"A husband and wife making love, is not wrong, Hermione," Draco said as he finished buttoning his slacks.

"We're not married, Draco," Hermione tried hard to suppress a sob.

He smirked at her, "There are divorce papers downstairs saying otherwise."

She blinked back tears. There was a long pause. "You're right," she said, looking up at him. Draco's face fell. She made a motion towards the door.

He quickly moved in front of her, halting her progress. He pulled on his shirt quickly. "Hermione, wait."

"You asked me here to sign papers, Draco," she said slowly. She choked back a sob. "Please let me do this for you?"

"I am not marrying Celeste," he said, grabbing hold of her upper arms, tightening his grasp, slightly.

She winced. He let up on his grip. She averted having to look into his grey eyes as tears flowed down her cheeks. She silently chided herself for showing so much emotion.

"I am not marrying her," he said in a measured tone. He lifted her chin up with his fingers, forcing her to look into his eyes. He leaned down to kiss her. Hermione kissed him back.

When they broke the kiss, she looked up into his face. She gulped. "She and you made a great couple back in school," she said softly. She gave him a weak smile, "I always knew you two would somehow end up together."

"Hermione," he said before she placed her fingertips over his lips. She shook her head.

"I was wrong to believe that I could ever belong in your world. Draco. You," she looked at him, "have made that clear since we were eleven."

Draco took in a defeated breath. He touched her cheek.

"When we were together," she paused. She looked down at her hands, a tear dropped on her wedding band. "Your father made it clear that I could never be good enough for you."

"Hermione, my father didn't know what he was talking about," he said.

She let out a laugh. She looked down again. "Your father was right, Draco."

"No," Draco shook his head, a tear slipped down his cheek. He turned her chin up.

"I'm not marrying Celeste, Hermione," he said, moving a strand of hair out of her eyes. "I can take care of you. I can take care of Lois."

Hermione realized what he was saying. She shook her head as another flow of tears began. "No," she said. "I know what you're thinking, Draco. I'm not going to let you throw everything away because of me; because of a filthy Mudblood."

Draco took in a sharp breath as he heard the foul name he used to call her echo in his ears. His eyes grew wide as she continued.

"Lois and I are getting by, Draco. I would never ask you," another tear dropped, "or your family for anything. You don't have to worry about us."

"You shouldn't marry someone," he said looking into her eyes, "if you're in love with someone else."

"Don't say that, Draco," she said placing her left hand on his lips.

"From the moment you walked away from the café," he said taking a hold of her hand. He touched her wedding band, "I felt like you took a piece of my heart with you."

He smiled at her as he held her hand to his chest. "I thought I could shake that feeling off," he looked into her face.

"But not one moment went by that I haven't thought of you. I can't get your face out of my mind, the way your smile brightens up a room."

"I smell strawberries and vanilla everywhere I go," he took a deep breath.

"Your touch on my skin lingers," he said running his thumb across her cheeks, wiping her face.

"I've eaten so many times at Ono that Lani and Ka'el have practically taken me in as a 'calabash nephew,' she calls me."

"I've bought one book each week from Flourish and Blotts in hopes of bumping into you. The library's a hundred fifty or so books larger than when you left," he looked down away from her for a moment.

"I've only finished one book, though. It's not even one that I purchased. You left that Muggle fairy tale on our nightstand. I've read it countless numbers of times, adding my own tears to the pages on which you left yours," he said losing himself in her eyes. He watched as she choked back a sob.

He touched the gold Wizarding wedding band that hung on his chain to his chest. "I wear this here to keep you close to my heart. I love you," he said taking a gulp as he gently took her hands into his. "It took me sixteen years to realize it. It's taken three more years to find you to tell you that."

He leaned down. Hermione closed her eyes. They kissed each other. She lost herself in the kiss for a moment. Then she opened her eyes. She felt the enormous office closing in on her. She couldn't breathe. She slipped her hands out of his. "I have to go, Draco."

"Please Hermione," he said, pleading as he watched her reach for the doorknob. He quickly tried to button his shirt.

"Finally," Steven said as he saw the doorway inch open. He needed Draco to sign several parchments before the meeting that was to begin any moment now. Steven held the quill up to the paper in front of Mr. Malfoy. "These need to be signed, Sir."

"Can this wait, Steven," Draco looked at his assistant.

Steven, wide eyed, shook his head. Hermione nodded at the young man before giving Draco one last look.

Draco took the quill and started signing. "Stop her," he said aloud.

Steven stood rooted to his spot, confused. He held the last parchment for his boss to sign as they both watched the lift doors close on Hermione.

"You're not going to sack me are you, Sir," the young office assistant asked with a hint of fear.

Draco clenched his jaw and then relaxed. He shut his eyes briefly as he signed the last of the paperwork, "No, Steven."

"You're not going to hex me are you?"

"Don't tempt me, Steven," he said as he was finishing his last signature.

"Uh, you missed a button, Sir," Steven said pointing at the usually well-groomed Malfoy.

Draco looked down at his shirt. He huffed, adjusting his buttons as he rushed for the lift.

Chapter 25

A.N. Okay, we're 2/3 of the way through; only another dozen or so short chaps left. Enjoy!

Hermione quickly exited the lift and rushed down the hallway towards Family Services. She turned the corner and fell flat to the floor. She was a little dazed at first. Then quickly pulled the lapels of her jacket closer together as she remembered she had nothing on underneath. She looked up to a familiar face.

The young man helped his old Gryffindor classmate up. "Hermione, are you okay?" Dean asked.

"I'm fine, Dean," she said, a little wobbly.

"Draco said you'd be back signing papers," Dean said smiling at her.

"Yeah," she said a little breathless. "Actually, I was heading back to Family Services to finish the paperwork. It was nice seeing you again, Dean."

"Yeah, sure," Dean said almost to himself as he watched the young Muggle-born quickly walk towards the end of the hall to the small office she had exited over an hour ago.

Hermione entered the small office and bypassed the witch at the receptionist desk. She opened the door to Mr. Norris's office. She saw the short bespectacled man looking over the Daily Prophet.

"Mr. Norris," the young brunette witch said softly. "Let's get those papers signed."

"Sure, Hermione," Mr. Norris said as he stood up. He held up the divorce papers. "Where's Draco?"

"I think it's best if I just sign it without him, Mr. Norris," she said, choking back a sob.

"Hermione," the older man shook his head. "Wizarding Laws state . . ."

"Look Mr. Norris, I wouldn't want to be the one to explain to Mr. Malfoy why his son's wedding was delayed," she looked into his eyes, almost pleadingly.

Mr. Norris nodded. She picked up a quill and took in a breath. Mr. Norris placed the divorce papers in front of her. She looked at the papers. She read the signature blocks. She ran a finger over his name as a tear dropped onto the paper. Her maiden name jumped off the parchment, Hermione Granger. After signing the marriage certificate, it wasn't as if she had ever signed again with Malfoy as her last name.

Her signature usually flowed very nicely. But, this time it was hard to steady her left hand as she looked at the gold piece of Muggle jewelry while she signed. She took a deep breath as she handed over the signed documents to the older wizard.

He looked down at the parchment and then back up to the young witch. He nodded at the woman with the tear-streaked face. "Well, Ms. Granger," the head of Family Services began softly, "We'll close the loop as soon as Mr. Malfoy signs. Are you going to wait for him?"

“Okay,” he continued as he saw her shake her head. “We’ll owl you a certified original copy of the signed divorce decree.”

“Thanks, Mr. Norris,” she said offering her hand to be shaken. The older wizard shook her hand. She nodded at him as she was about to take her leave.

“Hermione,” Mr. Norris said, stopping her. “A lot of the marriages under the Muggle Marriage Laws didn’t work out. Since its repeal, a little over half of them divorced. Before that, a number of the marriages didn’t end so well.

“But there are some marriages that have worked, flourished even. They are the most magical unions. I am sorry it did not work out between you and Draco,” the old wizard looked at her.

“Me, too, Sir. But, Draco and I were never meant to be. At least now, he’s found his true match,” she said as a tear rolled down her cheek. She breathed in. “It was really nice seeing you, Sir. Thanks for the favor.”

She quickly exited the small office and headed for the exit of the Ministry building. For a June day, it was slightly nippy. The cumulus clouds formed over the buildings. She gathered the lapels of her jacket close as she shivered. She passed Saint Mungo’s, the Wizarding equivalent of a Muggle hospital. She saw the posters out front detailing the annual benefit dinner that Narcissa Malfoy headed at Malfoy Manor. Hermione couldn’t stop the tears from starting again.

She broke into a run toward the small bar that served as a travel point between Muggle and Wizarding worlds. She ran quickly through the bar as all the witches and wizards saw the blaze of her trail as she exited into the Muggle world.

She bent over at the waist trying to catch her breath. Muggle passersby noticed the young lady. She quickly got her bearings. She pulled her jacket tighter again as she felt the first drops of rain on her face, camouflaging her tears. She rushed towards the direction of the Muggle cemetery, her sanctuary.

O-O-O

“Dean,” Draco said bumping into his coworker as he exited the lift.

“That’s the second Malfoy today,” Dean smiled, “You and Hermione have got to learn to take it easy.”

“Where is she?” Draco asked.

“She was heading to Family Services,” Dean said following Draco down the hallway that led to that office. “I thought you signed the papers already.”

“No,” Draco said quickening his step.

Dean stopped in his tracks wondering to himself why the paperwork wasn’t done yet. He reminded his best friend, “Hey, Draco, we’ve got a meeting in five minutes up in my office.”

“I’ll be there, Dean,” the blonde haired wizard said as he opened the door to the tiny office. “I just got to take care of one thing.”

Dean decided to wait for Draco right outside. He was actually more curious about how this divorce thing was going to play out with the young estranged couple. Draco never admitted to him, but he could see it in his eyes that there was something still there between him and Hermione.

Draco quickly bypassed the reception area, missing the witch rolling her eyes at him, as he was the second one to do so within the last ten minutes. He opened the door to Mr. Norris's office. He looked quickly around hoping to find Hermione there. All he saw was a smiling bespectacled older wizard. Draco sighed.

"Ah, Mr. Malfoy," Mr. Norris said as he placed documents on the counter. He readied a quill and inkwell for the young wizard.

"Shall we put the finishing touches on the divorce decree? Ms. Granger," he continued not seeing Draco cringe, "has already signed them. And here is the marriage license, you can sign that before your fiancée. That way, I can send it to Ms. Profesi to get the ball rolling in time for Saturday's wedding."

Draco looked down at Hermione's shaky signature. He saw the wet spots, as he knew a couple of tear drops fell. He took in a deep breath.

"I'm not signing this," the young wizard said, slightly crinkling the decree.

"Whoa," Mr. Norris said gripping Draco's wrists forcing him to let up on the parchment. He knew the document couldn't be damaged before the final signatures were in play otherwise the divorce could not be considered official.

"I was not in the room when my wife signed it. Mr. Norris, you know the Wizarding Bylaws," Draco said desperately trying to cling on to something. "Hermione and I are still married as far as I am concerned."

"Young Master Malfoy," the older wizard said wiping his brow. "Your wife, hmmph, I mean your ex-wife did us all a favor and signed the documents. Your father wants this whole thing expedited. Please sign."

Draco looked down at the decree again. He clenched his teeth. "This decree is null and void," he tore the parchment into pieces. Mr. Norris's eyes almost shot out of his head. "I was not in the room when she signed. Until we're both in the same room together, Hermione and I are still married."

The younger wizard took in a breath as he left the bespectacled wizard still wiping his brow as new sweat beaded, worried about what sort of progress report he would be giving the young man's father. Draco exited Family Services and was about to exit the Ministry Building from the exit near Mr. Norris's office as he tried to think of where Hermione would be at that moment. Dean was still outside leaning on the wall.

"Hey," Dean grabbed a hold of Draco's wrist surprising him. "We've got a meeting to go to."

"But," Draco knew it was useless to resist. He looked at the back door one last time. He turned the other way leading Dean to the lift that would take them up to Dean's office.

They entered the lift. Draco turned to his best man, "I'm not marrying Celeste."

Dean's eyes were just like Mr. Norris's as the bell dinged signaling their arrival to the 51st floor. Dean had to shake himself out of it as the doors almost closed upon him. He had to hurry to get to Draco. This was definitely going to be an interesting weekend.

O-O-O

Hermione fell to her knees as she reached her parents' graves. Her shoulders shook as she sobbed. She lay on her side and pulled her knees into her chest as the tears rolled down her cheeks. She lay crying for a long while as the rain, increasing in strength, pelted down on her.

9

Chapter 26

Chowder with an old friend

Hermione finally got her bearings. She sat up and pulled her knees into her chest as she looked at her mother's headstone. She blinked through the tears and the raindrops.

"It's over, Mum," she said. "Fairy tale endings don't seem to work for me."

She stood up shakily. She took a deep breath. She would have to get home somehow, without her wand. 'Ginny,' she thought. She took a deep breath and pulled her jacket in close as she headed for the Muggle entrance of the Leaky Cauldron.

O-O-O

She rapped on the door in the neighborhood of Godrick Hollow. She waited, shivering as the rain had not let up. The door opened and a very pregnant red-haired Dr. Thomas stood wide-eyed.

"Hey, Ginny," the brown haired older witch said weakly.

Ginny pulled her into the house out of the cold. The younger witch looked at her friend and hugged her. Hermione breathed in deeply.

"I got you all wet," the soaked witch said.

"We have to get you out of that jacket, Hermione," she said ushering her into the kitchen where she conjured up two cups of tea.

"I don't have anything underneath," Hermione admitted hesitantly as she looked up at her old housemate.

Ginny nodded. She exited the kitchen for a moment and then returned with a Gryffindor sweatshirt, grey sweatpants and a towel. "Do I want to know why you've got nothing on underneath?"

Hermione took another breath as she took her clothes off and dried herself. Ginny began to ladle two bowls of clam chowder that she had made for lunch. She placed the two bowls along with a French baguette on the table as Hermione finished putting the warm sweatshirt on. She took a seat looking up at the expectant mother.

"Ginny, can I use your fireplace to floo home?"

"Here eat up," Ginny said as she handed her friend a spoon.

"Really, Ginny, I should be," she began but stopped as Ginny raised her eyebrow. She ate a spoonful of the thick soup. "This is good."

"You could've just apparated with your wand," Ginny said as she placed a drying spell on the wet clothes.

"I," Hermione stammered. "I don't have my wand with me."

“What?” Ginny asked. The one thing a Wizarding person should not leave without in the Wizarding world was his or her wand.

“I left it . . . up in Draco’s office,” she said as she dipped a piece of bread into her chowder before eating it.

“Draco’s office. You signed the papers in his office?” Ginny asked fishing for information.

Hermione took a gulp. She bit her lower lip. She stood up and went to get something from the pile of drying clothes. She pulled out her wallet.

“Here,” she said showing the former Gryffindor the picture her student had e-mailed her.

Ginny studied the picture. She nodded at first and then her eyes were like saucers. “The marriage was sealed?”

“Yeah,” Hermione admitted.

She went on to tell her about vacationing in Hawaii after not being able to get her old teaching job back. She fell in love with the place and found a home in the Muggle world in a town called Pearl City on the main island. She got a job teaching Chemistry to high school students.

She told her about finding out that she was pregnant three months after she had left the United Kingdom. She told her about her gay Squib roommate who pretended to be her husband when Draco surprisingly showed up.

Ginny nodded again. “I still don’t get why Draco brought you up to his office.”

“He wanted to confront me about Lois. One thing led to another and,” Hermione looked down at her soup.

Ginny laughed. “You made love up in his office? Where?”

“Not funny, Ginny,” Hermione groaned. She added, “On his desk.”

Ginny laughed a little more. Hermione eventually joined in. They both continued to eat the rest of their meal.

“I know it was stupid, Ginny. He’s getting married on Saturday,” Hermione said after a while. She took a final sip of her tea.

“Hermione,” the younger woman began. She studied her friend’s face finally realizing something, “You love him, don’t you?”

Hermione couldn’t look her friend in the eye, “It doesn’t matter how I feel about him.”

“Hermione, you have to tell him,” Ginny said as she watched her friend stand.

“Thanks for lunch, Ginny. I should get going,” Hermione said as she started to change back into her now dried clothes.

Ginny stood up as well. She shrugged her shoulders knowing she probably wouldn’t be able to talk her friend out of leaving. “You should stay. Mrs. Malfoy’s St. Mungo’s Charity Ball is tonight.”

"I wouldn't want to get in the way of things. Besides, this is Draco's weekend. I don't want to be a distraction," Hermione said as she finished folding the sweats and placing them on the table.

"So you *did* sign the paperwork?"

"He deserves the chance to marry her," the older witch wiped a tear. "He's waited this long."

"Hermione," the redhead began as she looked into her friend's eyes. She nodded. "He was very lucky to have you, when he did."

Hermione pulled her friend in for a hug. Hermione looked down at Ginny's stomach. "You have to owl me when you give birth."

"I'm sure Ronda and Lois will be playmates," Ginny said.

"I think Lois would like that," Hermione kissed Ginny on the cheek before heading into the fireplace.

Chapter 27

st mungo's — II

10 Jun. Thurs. 2000 (8:00 p.m.) BST

Draco had opted to wear a black Muggle tuxedo to his mother's charity ball. He straightened his dark green tie, as he looked into the trophy case right outside of the ballroom. He took in a breath as he thought of the Muggle-born witch. He entered the ballroom and made a beeline toward the main table.

Dean stood up and shook his co-worker's hand. Draco took the seat in between the tall dark man and his fiancée. To Celeste's left was Corey Reimers who chose to come stag to the function. Draco looked at his old housemate and breathed in.

"Ah, Draco, you made it," his mother nodded at him.

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world, Mum," Draco smiled.

"Ginny tells us that Hermione couldn't make it," Mrs. Malfoy said sincerely. "That's too bad."

"Yeah," Draco said nodding at Ginny. He ate a spoonful of soup. He took a deep breath. Krank must have been inspired.

He smiled remembering her entrance three years ago. He had held his breath as he watched her glide into the room. She walked in with feigned confidence that only he and she knew she didn't have. 'She could sure wear her House Colors,' he thought.

"Hey," Dean said nudging Draco, "You all right?"

Draco shook himself out of his daydream. He smiled, "Yeah."

Dean looked at his friend, squinting at him. "This is going to be a long weekend, isn't it?"

Draco laughed. He continued with his dinner as conversation filtered throughout the ballroom.

O-O-O

It didn't even bother him as he watched his former Slytherin Housemate nuzzle his fiancée's neck. He took a sip of his fire whiskey before leaving it on the table. He headed for the couple.

"May I cut in?" Draco addressed the wizard.

Corey Reimers looked him up and down and then conceded. He watched as Draco whisked the blonde fashion model away.

"You look great, Celeste," he said making conversation as he commented on the deep emerald sleeveless dress robe the young witch had on.

Celeste studied his face. She was a bit disarmed at how his expression showed disinterest.

“Draco, what’s going on?” Celeste looked into his face.

Draco looked at her and breathed. He leaned into her cheek and in the most sincere tone, “I’m not marrying you on Saturday.”

The smile on her face suddenly changed to a frown. She pushed him off and slapped him across the face. “What the fuck are you saying?”

“Such language, Celeste,” Draco smirked as he checked his jaw. “I can’t marry you on Saturday.”

By this time, the guests dancing near them stopped to watch what was unfolding. They looked curiously, as to how this was going to end.

“This has something to do with that *filthy* Mudblood, doesn’t it?” she fumed.

Draco took a deep breath. It took every ounce of will not to round on her.

“I’m not in love with you, Celeste. I have to follow my heart this time,” he said excusing himself from the stunned ballroom.

Ginny and Dean looked at each other. They both shrugged. They continued to dance, exchanging smiles.

Chapter 28

Late night boob tube watching

11 Jun. Fri. 0010 (12:10 a.m.) HST

Hermione sighed as she dropped her keys onto the small table next to the front door. It had already been a long week and it was only early Friday morning. She hated having to work her second job at nights. Jon was always good about volunteering to baby-sit.

Things were going to be a bit different after Jon finally finished moving in with Mike. He would be done by the following Monday. Lois was camping with Celia's family and wouldn't be back until later on that morning.

So it was weird to think that Jon was home, asleep in front of the television. She walked towards the sleeping figure on the couch ready to wake him up and turn off the TV.

She turned the lamp on as she turned the TV screen off. "Hey, you fell asleep watching TV," she said as the sleeping figure stirred.

Her face almost fell when she watched the young man run his fingers through his long blonde bangs. He wiped the sleep from his eyes. He blinked up at her.

"What are you doing here?" she asked softly still surprised to see her ex-husband lying on her couch.

"Watching the boob tube," he said standing up as he pointed to the television.

"That's boob tube," she said in exasperation as Draco closed the distance between them. "You know what I mean, Draco."

He moved a strand of hair out of her eyes. She took a deep breath. "I came to speak with my wife. Jon and I hung out all afternoon. He said you were working late," he said touching the collar of her chef coat.

"Go home, Draco," she said taking a step back. "You have a fiancée to marry on Saturday."

She headed to her room, removing her chef coat as she shut her door. She turned to the door as she dropped the coat on the floor. 'He's gone,' she thought.

She turned around. "Bloody hell, Draco," she said in a harsh whisper. "That's not fair."

"Magic, Hermione," Draco said closing in on her. He kissed her. She wrapped her arms around his neck.

"What are you doing here, Draco?" she asked, taking in deep breaths, as they broke their kiss.

"I came to return your wand," he said handing her the thin stick she had left in his office. She breathed in.

She dropped her wand to the floor. He pulled her to the bed. They fell on it. Draco turned her on her back. He looked into her eyes.

“Go home, Draco,” she said, brushing a lock of his blonde hair away from his eyes and hooking it behind his ear.

“I love you,” Draco said looking into her face. She bit her lower lip nervously.

“These are just novel feelings, Draco. They’ll soon pass,” Hermione said, blinking quickly to quell any flow of tears.

“What are you talking about?” He said touching her face.

She shut her eyes. “You can’t love me, Draco.”

He placed his forehead gently on hers as he, too, shut his eyes. He opened them again, his gaze burning, questioning.

“You can’t love me,” she said again as a tear rolled down her cheek. His face contorted, looking perplexed. Then she added softly, “The day you profess your love for me is the day you would gladly give up magic, remember.”

Draco took in a sharp breath. His words came back to haunt him. He shook his head in denial as he remembered saying that to her their first night together.

He took hold of his wand. He looked at it. Hermione knew what he was about to do.

“No,” she said as she stopped him from breaking his wand. She shook her head as a tear rolled down her cheek.

He took another deep breath, as he looked her in the eyes. He asked her softly, “Tell me you don’t love me and I’ll go.”

“I don’t love you,” she said avoiding his gaze.

Draco’s heart fell. “I don’t believe you,” he said shakily. “Hermione, look into my eyes and tell me you don’t love me and I’ll walk away from you forever.

“Please,” he said as he gently turned her chin so that she would be looking straight into his eyes.

She searched his face. She took a breath. “I love you so much, it hurts.”

Draco kissed her. She kissed him back. He pulled away for a moment. He looked into her eyes. He held up his wand. She nodded. Draco waved it. Their clothes ended up on the ground as Draco pulled the covers over them. They exchanged wry smiles before they made love.

O-O-O

11 Jun. Fri. 0810 (8:10 a.m.) HST

Draco yawned and stretched. He looked around the small room forgetting where he was, as the sunlight streamed in from the small window. He looked at the nightstand next to the small bed. He smiled at the Muggle still pictures of the little two year old and her mother.

“Morning,” Hermione said, drying her hair with a towel as she walked into the room from the bathroom.

“Morning to you, too,” Draco said sitting straight up as he noticed she was already dressed in her relaxed fit blue jeans and her maroon colored T-shirt.

“I had to take a shower. I smelled like the grill at work,” she smiled at him as he stood up with a sheet wrapped around his waist.

“I love the way you smell,” he said as they kissed each other. “Hamburgers, strawberries, it doesn’t matter.”

She looked into his eyes. She kissed his cheek, “You’d better get dressed.”

He moved a strand of hair out of her eyes. “I’m sorry about what I said back in the library about Krank and his staff.”

Hermione avoided his eyes for a moment. Then she looked up and gave him a weak smile, “It pays the bills. Even with my parents’ insurance money, I’ve got twelve years left on the mortgage. I set some money aside every month for Lois’s college fund,” she took a deep breath. “The extra money goes to paying for the groceries and utilities.”

“Hermione,” Draco said as he touched her face. “I can help you and Lois . . .”

Hermione put her fingertips on his lips, interrupting him. “I won’t have you stay because you feel responsible, Draco, I can’t. It wouldn’t be fair to you. You have a chance to move on. You and Celeste make sense,” she said softly. “You deserve her.”

“I deserve you,” Draco said, pulling her closer.

She looked up at him again. “Our marriage was an obligatory speed bump, Draco.”

“What do you mean?” he said looking at her.

She looked down. “You needed to get married before you turned twenty-eight in order to be eligible for the Malfoy fortune,” she continued, as he looked puzzled. “Mr. Weasley told me about it.”

Draco breathed in. His eyes widened.

“Several years ago, you were slated to ask Celeste for her hand. Everybody in the Wizarding World knew that,” she smiled, shrugging her shoulders. “Then the stupid Muggle Marriage Laws came into play. You got stuck with me.”

“Hermione,” he shook his head.

“Draco, you . . . you two were Hogwarts sweethearts. You were destined for each other,” she said touching his cheek. “Second chances like this rarely happen. You should embrace it.”

“What about us? What about *our* second chance?”

Hermione kissed him again before they heard knocking from outside her door. They exchanged looks. “Get dressed,” she said softly.

“Mom, I’m home,” a little voice said from the other side of the door.

"We'll be right there, Hon," Hermione said as she urged Draco to hurry. He smiled at her as he got his pants zipped and his shirt buttoned.

"Mommy, Daddy," the little girl squealed as the door to the master bedroom opened. The little girl's lower lip trembled. "I mean . . ."

"It's okay, Lois. Daddy knows," Hermione breathed in as Draco knelt down. Hermione nodded at the elderly babysitter who returned her smile and a thumbs-up sign. Hermione rolled her eyes as the old woman exited the house.

The young girl gave her father a hug. Draco wanted to hold the child in his arms forever as if to make up for all the hugs he had missed the past two years.

"Mommy, can Daddy stay for breakfast?"

"I don't know, Kiddo," Hermione looked at her daughter as Draco stood up. "Daddy has another engagement to get to."

"I can stay for a little while, Lois. Mommy's the best cook in the world," he said as he placed his hand into Hermione's.

O-O-O

Breakfast that morning reminded her of those she used to have with her own parents when she was younger. They were a family. She smiled as she took a bite from her pancake. She watched Draco hold Lois on his lap laughing at her camp stories.

Hermione couldn't keep a tear from rolling down her cheek. She turned to the sink.

"Hey, you three," they all turned to see Jon walk in.

"Hey," Hermione said. Jon shook Draco's hand.

"Uncle Jon, Daddy ate breakfast with us," the little girl said.

"Oh," Jon said raising his eyebrows at Hermione and Draco. "Is there any breakfast left for me?"

Hermione handed him a plate. She looked at Draco. She took in a breath.

"Jon, do you mind watching Lois for a little while. I have to drop Draco off at the travel point."

"Hermione, I can stay longer," Draco said.

"I don't want you to be late for your dinner," she breathed.

Draco breathed. He shut his eyes.

"Yeah, sure, I can watch Lois," Jon said.

Hermione had to leave the kitchen. It was as if the walls were closing in on her. Draco knew there was no use in arguing with his former childhood adversary.

He knelt in front of Lois. He kissed her forehead. "Daddy's got to take care of some things where I live. I love you very much, Lois."

The little girl wrapped her arms around his neck. "I love you, too, Daddy," she looked into the same grey eyes she had. "Come back soon."

It was Draco's turn to hug the little girl. He nodded.

He looked up at Jon. "Come on Kiddo. Let's go watch all the cartoons Mom doesn't let you watch," Jon said extending his hand to the small child as he nodded at Draco.

Draco went to look for Hermione. He found her outside sitting in the contraption called a car. He joined her.

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews.

Chapter 29

At the travel point

11 Jun. Fri. 0900 (9:00 a.m.) HST

Even at nine in the morning, the small bar was teeming with travelers taking a break, sipping cocktails. The bartender nodded at the young couple who just entered. Draco smiled at Hermione as he looked into her eyes.

Hermione took a deep breath. She took a step towards him. She fixed his tie for him. “Honestly, I don’t know how you got all the witches at Hogwarts to notice you,” she smiled up at him as she finished adjusting the dark green piece of wardrobe. “There. Now you’re ready to go. You’re already late for your own rehearsal dinner.”

He shook his head, smiling a toothless grin at her. “I’m not marrying Celeste. So it doesn’t matter if I’m already two hours late for it.”

Hermione shut her eyes for a second, in hopes of quelling her tears. “You’ll probably still make the dessert course,” she rationalized his leaving her for the final time.

“You’re not going to let up on this one are you?” he said, caressing her cheek.

“Draco, you have the chance to move on with your life,” Hermione averted his eyes. She finally looked up. She patted his chest. “I never told you how handsome a groom you were years ago. You’ll be just as handsome tomorrow.”

She blinked rapidly trying to stay the flow of tears that were already starting down her cheek, “You and Celeste are like those characters in those fairy tales my mum and dad used to read to me at bedtime. Prince Charming always gets his Princess, Draco. You and Celeste will live happily ever after.”

“Hermione,” he said as he cupped her chin with his hand, “What is it going to take to get you to believe that Celeste and I don’t belong with each other?”

She pulled in close to him, her palms on his chest, and her cheek against his shirtfront. She felt him take a deep breath. He wrapped his arms around her in an embrace. She knew he should have left by now.

“You’ve never played fair, you know that,” she said, shutting her eyes for a moment. She looked up at him. She took in a breath. “Why couldn’t you be that same asshole from three years ago?”

Draco laughed. He put his forehead on hers. He looked into her eyes and took a breath. “You know how much I love to torture you,” he smiled. She laughed.

It was her turn to take in a breath. She pulled away slightly, but not enough to break his grasp. His hands were lightly touching the small of her back.

"Your father's going to somehow say that it was my fault that you're not at that dinner," she tried to laugh as she straightened out his tie again.

"Don't worry about him," he laughed as well.

"He loves you, you know. He's only looking out for your best interest," Hermione said looking up into the same grey eyes as his father's, the same as her daughter's. All he did was nod.

She felt the small wedding band he wore on the chain around his neck through his shirt. For a moment, both rings grazed each other. She looked into his eyes again.

"Family is very important, Draco," she began.

Draco studied her face. "I know, Hermione," he said touching her cheek.

"Sometimes familial obligation," she paused, "makes you do things you normally would not do on your own."

"You married me because of familial obligation," she looked up at him again. She took a step back. "You'll marry tomorrow for the same reason."

"Hermione," Draco almost whined.

She placed the tips of her hand on his lips. He gasped slightly. He looked into her eyes, searching.

"You should go," Hermione said. "I'm sure Krank made a great dessert dish."

Draco said almost breathlessly as he looked into her eyes, "I'm already full from breakfast."

Hermione smiled back. "Say, 'hi,' to your mum for me," she said as she ran her palm over his chest again. "Tell Ginny to owl me after Ronda is born," she continued.

"Hermione," Draco said, shaking his head at her.

"Draco, listen," she interrupted softly. Draco's eyes grew large. There was a slight pause.

"Whatever happens tomorrow," she continued. She breathed in a choked breath. "Lois will always be here for you."

"Hermione," Draco said almost whining. She placed her finger on his lips again as she looked into his grey eyes.

"You can finally get rid of me," she smiled sadly. "Even war couldn't do that."

"Hermione, I'm not marrying Celeste tomorrow," he said a little frustrated.

"I know," she nodded, not stopping a tear from falling. "Go."

"I feel like you're taking another piece of my heart with you," he said as a tear rolled down his cheek.

Hermione wiped it with her thumb, "Go. You don't want your Father to curse you with the *Cruciatus*."

They both nervously laughed. He looked into her dark brown eyes and realized he didn't mind being lost in them. He took a deep breath and before she could protest, he pulled her into a deep kiss. She didn't stop him, nor did she stop herself from returning it.

Hermione finally broke their lip lock. She took a step back from him. "Go," she said as she gestured to the fireplace under Greenwich Mean Time on the wall with the map of the world on which all the time zones were painted.

Draco nodded, defeated. He entered the fireplace and turned to face her. Unlike their departure at the café years ago, she didn't walk away from him. This time it would be his turn. He did the same thing he did years ago; he closed his eyes as he framed her face for the last time into his memory. He opened his eyes to see that she was still there, watching him intently. She nodded for him to depart. He returned her nod, shut his eyes again before dropping the floo powder.

O-O-O

She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. He was gone forever, and it was for the best, she kept trying to tell herself that. She took a step back and turned around. She quickly headed for the Muggle exit, almost breaking into a run as she reached the Muggle sidewalks. Like that day outside of the café, she couldn't stop the tears from flowing down her cheeks. She got into her car and sat, crying for quite a while.

O-O-O

After Draco took a step into the Leaky Cauldron, he turned to see the empty fireplace, still picturing her brave face. A cold sweat suddenly ran over him. He looked at the clock above the bar, 8:15. He would have to face "the music" soon, as Hermione would put it. He pulled his wand out and apparated into the foyer of Malfoy Manor. He took another deep breath before heading towards the lit dining hall.

A.N. Thanks again for all the reviews. There's about eight or nine more chapters to go.

Chapter 30

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews. Okay, so this is how Draco will have to marry the next day just as Hermione thought.

Familial Obligation

11 Jun. Fri. 2015 (8:15 p.m.) BST

Draco quickly walked through the house. He took in a deep breath. He patted his pants pocket and smiled to himself.

O-O-O

The ride to the travel point was quiet. The music from the radio was soft and peaceful. Draco watched Hermione the whole time, from when they pulled out of her driveway to when she pulled into the parking stall at the shopping complex near his travel point.

He smiled at her as she turned off the ignition. She gave him a weak smile in return. They sat quietly for a while. Hermione took a deep breath.

She dug into her wallet. She held something in her hand, Draco noted. She looked up at him. She handed him the wallet sized Muggle photo.

“My student e-mailed me the picture. I want you to have this,” she looked up at him. “A family photo; so you can remember how dysfunctional we are.”

Draco couldn’t help laughing. Hermione eventually joined him. “We’d better go, Draco,” she said as she opened her door.

Draco had no choice but to follow. He got out of the car and almost had to run to catch up to her. He held the bar door open. They entered. He placed the photo into his pocket and gave it one last pat.

O-O-O

“Mum, Father,” he nodded as he entered the large dining room. “Celeste, Mr. Profesi, Mrs. Profesi.

“Dean, Ginny,” he said, actually smiling as he headed toward the place setting between his best man and the witch that he had proposed to months ago. Draco ignored the sour look on Celeste’s face. Draco smiled as he looked down at his chocolate cake; Hermione was right, he had made it in time for dessert. He noted that everyone seemed to be done so he quickly gobbled up the sweet tort in three gulps. He took a quick swig of the water in his glass and then nonchalantly wiped his mouth with his napkin as if walking in two hours late was no big deal.

“So, what’s up?” Draco asked.

“This is inexcusable, Lucius,” Cecil Profesi said, throwing his napkin to the table as he stood up signaling his family to depart.

“Look, Cecil,” Lucius Malfoy said calmly. “Everything will be taken care of by tomorrow. We will see you then.”

Mr. Profesi narrowed his eyes at his former Death Eater colleague. He eventually nodded his head in agreement, as he followed his wife and daughter out of the dining room.

Mr. Malfoy looked back at the remaining dinner attendees. He narrowed his eyes at Draco.

“Wow, Hon, look at the time,” Dean said, looking at his empty wrist. He held his hand out to Ginny. “We’d better go as well.”

She got out of her chair gingerly. She nodded at Mrs. Malfoy and Draco before she allowed her husband to lead her out.

“I need to speak with you in my den, Draco,” his father said tersely.

“Can’t this wait until tomorrow, Father?”

Lucius Malfoy slammed his open hand down on the table causing his wife to jump. Draco calmly studied his father’s face. He stood up and headed towards his father’s den. Narcissa Malfoy grabbed a hold of her husband’s forearm. She looked him in the eye. The glare in his eyes softened. She was the only one who could ever make him do that.

She kissed him on the cheek. “I’m sure he has a great explanation.”

Lucius Malfoy rolled his eyes. His wife smiled at him before she took her leave. He took a deep breath and turned to walk towards his den. ‘Let’s hear that bloody great explanation,’ he thought.

O-O-O

The older Malfoy walked into the den. His son was sitting on one of the couches looking at a small rectangular paper as he turned his wedding band on his chain. Lucius’s face softened a little. It was in this den that he had Father-Son talks with Draco as a child. The young man almost seemed like that small boy he remembered. He took a deep breath as he sat on the opposite couch from his son.

Draco placed the paper at his side and allowed the necklace to hang outside his shirt. He looked up at his father.

“I take it you were with Ms. Granger,” Lucius said, interlocking his fingers.

“Yes, I was with my wife,” the younger Malfoy said nodding.

“This rubbish has got to stop now, Draco,” his father’s voice boomed. “That Mudblood is not your wife.”

Draco’s face colored. But he found himself taking in a breath and calmed himself down, “According to Wizarding Laws, she still is.”

“Not for long,” Lucius said picking up some paperwork from the small coffee table between them. Draco looked at his father a little suspiciously.

“Family Service documents have to be original and undoctored, Father. I tore up the divorce decree before I could sign it. I’m still married to Hermione. I am not marrying

Celeste tomorrow,” his voice escalated.

Lucius gave him a smirk identical to his own. Draco was slightly taken aback. “You tore up a blank piece of paper, Son.”

Draco was speechless for a moment. “What are you talking about, Father?” he said eying the paperwork that his father had just handed to him.

He gulped as he saw the same parchment as he had torn up the day before. It was seamless, no apparent signs of repairs. He looked back up at his father.

“I asked Mr. Norris for a favor,” the older Malfoy said, raising an eyebrow. “A Time Turner is a wonderful thing. I’m sure Ms. Granger can attest to that.”

“I’m not signing this,” Draco said standing up.

“Sit down, Draco,” Lucius said, in a measured tone. Draco hesitated before he sat back down.

“What is that filthy Mudblood lording over you?” Lucius narrowed his eyes at his son.

“Don’t call her that,” Draco said, through clenched teeth.

“You are signing the divorce decree. Then you’ll sign the marriage license. Celeste has already signed it. Mr. Norris is waiting for me to owl it back to him so he can have the marriage certificate ready for tomorrow morning,” he handed Draco a self inking quill.

Mr. Malfoy’s eyes softened. “I know how difficult it is to be a part of this family, Son. You’ve had to live up to so much. Generations upon generations of Pure-blood unions and then the Ministry had to go institute that stupid law.

“Draco, I’m sorry you had to endure that. Marrying that particular Muggle-born was your mother’s idea. She’s usually right on the nose about things. I’m not quite sure what she was thinking.”

Draco could only laugh. He shut his eyes for a moment. He pictured Hermione’s smile. He finally looked up at his father.

“Draco, everything has righted itself. You helped to repeal the Muggle Marriage Laws. Son, you’re marrying your Hogwarts sweetheart. This Pure-blood union will make both of our families more powerful.

“Draco, you have a familial obligation to take care of,” his father said gesturing to the divorce decree in his son’s hands.

“What did you say?” Draco asked, flinching as he heard his last comment; Hermione’s prophetic statement echoed in his ears.

“I said you have a duty to this family,” his father reworded his last statement.

Draco looked down at the parchment paper again. He looked at Hermione’s shaky signature. He ran his finger over it, the same way he did the day before. “She said the same thing.”

“What sort of spell does she have over you, Draco?” The older Malfoy asked in exasperation.

“No spell, Father. She hasn’t practiced magic in years,” the young man gulped still staring at the parchment.

“Then what the hell is going on?” Lucius said, sounding almost exasperated.

“I just found out that she’s just as much in love with me as I am with her,” Draco laughed a little. “So in love that she signed these divorce papers because she thought I deserved to move on with my life. She even thought Celeste and I make a great couple. Can you believe that, Father, your ex saying that about your new fiancée?”

Draco looked down at the divorce papers again. He took a sharp breath. He signed them quickly as if it would hurt less. He did the same with the marriage license. He looked up at his father and dropped the two forms onto the coffee table as he stood up.

“It’s getting late. I’m going to turn in,” Draco said as his father stood up as well.

“I’ve got an 11 o’clock wedding to be at tomorrow morning,” the younger wizard started for the door. He felt for his chain. The Wizarding wedding band disappeared after he had signed the divorce decree. He felt a tear roll down his cheek. He took another deep breath.

He turned to face his father. He saw the same grey eyes that he had inherited. “She and you think alike in certain respects,” Draco said. “Family means a lot to her, too.”

The older Malfoy nodded, “Yes, it does. You and Celeste will have a great life together, Draco.”

“Yeah,” Draco said, looking back at where he sat, the small rectangular paper resting on the cushion. “We’ll have blonde haired blue or grey eyed Pureblood prats wreaking havoc at Hogwarts.”

Mr. Malfoy smiled at his son. “Draco, you’ll soon forget about Ms. Granger. Like you said, ‘she wanted you to move on with your life.’”

“She’s got a two year old daughter, Lois. She’s the cutest thing, Father. You should see her. She looks just like Hermione,” Draco paused. He smiled to himself before continuing, “She’s the coolest two-year old in the world; the nicest, purest, probably even the smartest. She takes after her mother, that way. Thank Merlin, the only things she inherited from her father are her eyes.”

Draco closed his eyes. He took a deep breath. He looked at his father then quietly added, “Good night, Father.”

“Good night, Draco,” Lucius watched his son walk out of the den.

He picked up the divorce decree and the marriage license. He placed both of them in an envelope and headed towards the window where one of his courier owls sat patiently waiting to fly. The older blonde wizard tied the parcel to the bird. He nodded at the owl, which returned the nod before flying away.

Lucius watched as the owl flew off into the distance. He sighed as he walked slowly towards the door. It had been a long day; heck, it had been a long week.

He stopped as the small rectangular paper that Draco had been looking at as he entered the den, caught his eye. He sighed again and went to retrieve it.

He studied the thick piece of paper. He flipped it over. The scene in the photo did not move. Then he realized it probably was a Muggle still photograph.

He studied the photo as he walked up the stairs to his and his wife's wing of the manor. It looked like a Muggle laboratory, probably Ms. Granger's classroom, he thought.

His wife was already asleep. He propped the little photo up against his lamp. He changed into his pajamas. He looked at his wife again as he smiled to himself before climbing into bed next to her.

He kissed her on the forehead before turning on his side facing his nightstand. His wife draped her arm over his hip. He smiled to himself again as he reached for the lamp.

He stopped himself. He looked at the photo more closely. Draco sat next to Hermione. Lois, his son had called the little girl, sat on Draco's lap. Draco was right. The young girl did look just like her mother: dark brown wavy hair up to her shoulders and a large smile. Mr. Malfoy smiled in spite of himself.

Then he sat upright. Narcissa Malfoy stirred. "What's up, Hon," she asked still barely conscious.

"Nothing. Go back to sleep, Cissy," her husband said, kissing her again on the forehead.

Lucius's heart rate increased. He had to take several deep breaths as if he were hyperventilating. What was it that Draco had said? The child had inherited her father's eyes. "Bloody hell," Lucius said holding the photo more closely. He looked at the picture again wondering if anything else could happen to screw up the already long week.

Chapter 31

12 Jun. Sat. 0011 (12:11 a.m.) HST

Hermione sat up quickly and turned on the light next to her bed. Another set of soft taps sounded at her door. She quickly wiped at her cheeks. She knew her eyes were quite puffy already.

“Come in, Lois,” the young mother said.

The little girl popped her head into her mother’s room. “Hi, Mom,” the little brown haired child said softly. She looked just like her mother when she was her age, everything except her large grey eyes.

“Come here,” Hermione said, tapping the empty side of her bed. The young child ran and jumped up onto her mother’s bed.

The young girl leaned into her mother’s embrace. Hermione hugged her daughter and kissed her on the top of her head.

“All right, Mommy?” the two-year old looked upwards.

“I’m fine, Kiddo,” her mother lied.

The young girl studied her mother’s face, “You’re crying about Daddy?”

Hermione smiled. She framed the young girl’s face with her hands. She took a breath. “I love you, you know that.”

The young girl nodded. “Mommy, Daddy’s coming back.”

Hermione pulled the child into her arms and cradled her there for a moment. She looked into the same eyes as her ex-husband. “What are you still doing up, Kiddo?” she asked, rocking the child.

The young girl yawned as it was after midnight. “I heard you crying.”

Hermione held her tighter. She couldn’t stop the tears that were welling up. Lois looked up into her mother’s face. It was the girl’s turn to frame her mother’s face. She wiped her cheeks with her small palms.

“Lois, Daddy just came for a visit,” she looked into her daughter’s eyes. “He’s getting married today.”

The young girl canted her head a little confused. She looked into her mother’s eyes.

“Daddy,” Hermione paused as she tried to search for the right words. “You’re going to have another mommy.”

“Hmmp,” the young girl said, crossing her arms in a huff before lying back into Hermione’s arms. Hermione couldn’t help smiling.

“He found someone that he loves. We should be happy for him. Grandpa Lucius likes your father’s choice. Celeste Profesi is a blonde haired, blue eyed, beautiful witch from a wealthy Pureblood family.”

“Just like Daddy,” the young girl said softly.

“Kiddo, your Daddy and I love you very much.”

“But not each other,” the perceptive two year old said.

Hermione didn’t know what to say at first. She took in a deep breath. “When you’re older, and I mean *much* older, you’ll understand how love works,” the young mother looked at the confused child.

“Sometimes,” Hermione paused, “It doesn’t matter how you feel about someone; family plays a big part in decisions of the heart.”

“Grandpa and Grandma Granger didn’t like Daddy?” Lois asked innocently.

“Oh, baby. I’m sure if they were alive, they would have liked him,” Hermione said sincerely, looking at her daughter.

“Grandpa Lucius and Grandma Narcissa didn’t like you?”

“Lois,” the brunette witch began. She looked away from the child for a moment. “You would like your Grandma Narcissa. She’s a nice lady.”

“But Grandpa?” Lois asked innocently.

“Your Grandpa Lucius is what we would call in the Muggle world, ‘Old School’,” Hermione began. “There was a time when some wizards and witches believed that . . . people like me didn’t have the right to do magic. And they hated us for it.”

“Grandpa’s one of them?” the little girl asked softly.

Hermione gulped. She studied the little girl’s face realizing what the young girl was thinking. “Grandpa would love you, no matter what.”

“But I’m your daughter, Mom.”

Hermione choked back a sob. She hugged the girl again. “Mommy, do you love Daddy?” the young girl asked.

Hermione gulped. Lois waited patiently as her grey eyes pierced through Hermione’s chocolate ones. “Yes.”

“Do I have to call her Mommy, too?” the little girl asked, yawning.

Hermione laughed shaking her head. She kissed the little child on the head. The little girl’s eyes fluttered closed. She fell asleep as Hermione rocked her.

5

A.N. Okay, sorry that was short . . . only several more chapters left.

Chapter 32

The Wedding of the Century

12 Jun. Sat. 1055 (10:55 a.m.) BST

Draco wore a dark green dress robe. He looked at himself in his full-length mirror, adjusting his black bow tie unnecessarily. He felt the chain that he wore around his neck. He breathed in as he closed his eyes. The familiar round gold piece was not there as he remembered signing the parchment.

He turned to his nightstand. He had read the Muggle fairy tale once again. He gingerly picked up the tattered paperback. He ran his finger over the cover. “Get over it, Draco,” he said to himself, as he headed towards the library.

Lucius Malfoy eyed the Muggle still, paying particular attention to the little girl in the photo. He saw his own eyes smiling back at him. He stood and placed the photo into the inside pocket of his robe as Narcissa Malfoy entered their bedroom.

“You look handsome as always,” his wife said as she adjusted his tie.

“You look beautiful, Cissy.”

“What’s wrong, Lu?” she said caressing his face, “Did you get any sleep last night?”

Her husband just smiled at her. He kissed the palm of her hand, “We’d better get down to the back patio. Ceremony will start in ten minutes.”

She looked into his eyes. “Everything will turn out fine, Lu. It’s Draco’s day today.”

Lucius Malfoy thought he saw a twinkle in his wife’s eye as if she knew something he didn’t. He smiled at her and took her hand. They walked down together.

Draco wasn’t even surprised as he saw the half-naked couple on the plush rug in front of the desk hitting their climax as he entered the library. He saw the reaction on his fiancée’s face. Draco took in a breath as he nonchalantly placed the book neatly and carefully on a shelf close to the door.

He turned to face the couple that was rapidly dressing. The blushing bride was progressively turning crimson as she felt her fiancé’s gaze on her.

“Look, Draco, it’s not what you think,” Celeste tried to explain herself.

“We’d better get to the backyard,” Draco said half-heartedly. Corey Reimers quickly nodded at the groom and exited the library leaving his lover to deal with her fiancé.

“Draco,” she said in an innocent tone.

“We’re going to be late for our own wedding. Shall we?” he nodded towards the door.

“Draco, about Corey and I . . .”

“It doesn’t matter, Celeste,” he said holding the door open for her. “The guests are waiting.

“Oh, Celeste,” Draco said as he allowed her a head start. “Don’t step into this room ever again.”

Celeste narrowed her eyes at him before leaving him. Draco looked at the library. He pulled out his wand and narrowed his eyes at the plush rug. He zapped the rug and it flamed and disappeared. Draco gritted his teeth as he quickly headed for the backyard.

Draco stood on the patio deck alongside Celeste. The ten thousand guests looked on as Father Norris nodded at Draco, prodding him to take Celeste’s hand so that the ceremony could continue.

Draco hesitated. He turned his head towards the crowd, catching a glimpse of his parents. He shut his eyes before turning back towards Celeste. He gingerly took her hands into his.

The bespectacled old wizard took in a breath himself. He cleared his throat before beginning. “We’re gathered here today to witness the union of two young lives. Marriage has always been a sacred bond between two people who love and respect each other. Ultimately, they believe they’ve found their match.

“In this day and age where we have been given back our opportunity to choose, these two young people have chosen each other,” Father Norris gave Draco a small nod. The young platinum blonde wizard could feel his chest tighten.

The old platinum blonde wizard shut his eyes. He saw the little child smile. Her grey eyes sparkled. Lucius Malfoy took in a breath as Narcissa Malfoy squeezed his hand. He let it out slowly.

“Now, if there is anyone who feels that these two young people should not be together, speak now or forever hold your peace,” Father Norris asked the age-old rhetorical question.

Lucius looked at his wife. Then he turned his attention towards his son. “*Wait!*” he yelled. “I object to this union!”

The crowd gasped in unison. Draco turned towards his father as he dropped Celeste’s hand.

“There is a true someone for everybody,” Lucius Malfoy began as he smiled at his wife. “I almost forgot about that. Initially I thought these two were meant for each other. Now, I’m not so sure.

“And I’m sure Ms. Profesi has found a better companion in Mr. Reimers,” Mr. Malfoy said. “I cannot, in good conscience, allow this union. And I’m sure my son will agree with that.”

Draco took in a deep breath. And for the first time during the ceremony, Draco actually smiled. Celeste's chin dropped. Draco couldn't be bothered.

There was a different set of gasps in the crowd. Draco looked over at one of the main tables where the Weasleys sat. Draco turned quickly to Dean and he nodded for them to go over there.

Ginny was going into labor, a month early. Dean and Draco hurried to her side.

"Breathe, Honey," Dean said as he took hold of Ginny's hand.

"You have to get her to St. Mungo's fast," Draco said looking at his best friend.

"Draco, accompany them to the hospital," Mr. Malfoy said as Draco turned to his father. Draco couldn't believe his ears.

"But, Sir," Draco said looking confused.

"The wedding is off, Draco," Mr. Malfoy said nodding for them to leave. "I'll take care of this. Family first."

Draco took in a deep breath, canting his head. He studied his father's face for a moment. He nodded and helped Dean to get Ginny on her feet. Lucius watched them apparate.

He himself took a deep breath as he patted his chest pocket, noting the small photograph was still there. Now to address the confused crowd, he smiled to himself.

A.N. Bracing for that tsunami. sirens been blasting every half hour. shouldn't be too bad, though (hopefully). Almost pau with the story; another 4 to 6 chapters or so. see you guys later.

Chapter 33

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews so far. As for the tsunami, nothing major came of it. hope everything will be okay with our Chilean friends.

He knows where we live . . .

12 Jun. Sat. 0620 (6:20 a.m.) HST

“Hey, you’re up,” Jon smiled at his Wizarding friend. “Coffee’s ready.”

She peeked at her watch. It read 6:20 a.m. She poured herself a cup of coffee and added some cream and sugar before taking a sip. She took a deep breath.

“Life goes on, Hermione,” he said standing next to her as he leaned against the counter. Hermione leaned her head against his shoulder for a moment.

She took another deep breath before giving him a weak smile. “I’d better start breakfast.”

O-O-O

The clock on the coffee machine read 6:35 as the eggs in the fry pan were ready to flip. Jon pulled the toast out of the toaster and set it on the table.

“So, Mike’s out of town again?” Hermione asked as she removed the lone serving of eggs and cracked two more into the pan.

“Yeah, his work keeps him busy,” the young English teacher smiled as he grabbed the slices of wheat bread that had just popped out of the toaster. “Besides, it gives me more time to spend with my favorite dysfunctional Wizarding family.”

“Ha ha ha,” Hermione smiled.

They both turned to see the small child looking expectantly. She held what looked to be an oversized white envelope.

“There was a big bird at your window,” the brown haired child said softly, her grey eyes widening.

Both Jon and Hermione looked at each other. Jon quickly went past the small child heading to Hermione’s room. Hermione knelt in front of Lois as she quickly took the envelope from her while making sure her daughter wasn’t hurt. She looked at the front of the envelope. It read, Hermione, Lois and Guest. She gulped as she stood up.

“Kiddo,” Hermione caught her breath as Jon came out of the bedroom shaking his head. “Why don’t you go see what cartoons are on, right now?”

The little child gave her mother a strange look. She rarely ever allowed her to watch Saturday morning cartoons. But the look in her mother’s eyes told her she probably shouldn’t question her. The little child nodded and headed towards the couch as she gave her uncle Jon and her mother one last look back.

Hermione's eyes grew larger than they already were as she opened the envelope. Jon looked over her shoulder and read silently as she read aloud.

"Mrs. Malfoy and I request your presence along with Lois at Malfoy Manor to celebrate the most important day in Draco's life," Hermione gulped. "The envelope is a port key that will bring you to Malfoy Manor. We will be expecting you within the hour."

The invitation was signed by Lucius Malfoy. Hermione couldn't stop a tear from falling onto the parchment. "He knows where we live," she said.

"I guess we're going to a wedding, huh," Jon said, breaking the silence. She looked up at him.

"You don't have to come, Jon. This isn't your problem," she sniffled. Lois looked at her uncle and mother. Uncle Jon brought her mother into his chest for a long hug.

"Hey, what are friends for?" he said into her cheek.

O-O-O

Lois sat on the couch in a sundress that had the most incredible shades of green. Her uncle Jon sat next to her all dressed up in a blue Armani suit.

"You look beautiful Kiddo," Jon said, patting the little child on the head.

"Uncle Jon," the little girl looked up at her mom's friend. "Do you think Grandpa will hate me, too?"

"Oh, Kiddo," Jon said picking up the young girl and placing her on his lap. "I don't think anyone could hate you. You'll be surprised how powerful family blood lines can be."

Lois looked straight into the squib's eyes. Then nodded as if she understood what he meant. They both stood up as Hermione entered the small living room. She wore her hair in a french twist with a few tendrils falling around her face. She wore very little makeup; just a touch of dark red lipstick and a light coat of foundation.

"Wow," Lois said wide eyed. .

Jon whistled. "Wow, you look amazing, Hermione," he said as he approached her. He gently ran a finger over the spaghetti strap that looped over her right shoulder. "Burgundy. That's a bold choice."

"I'd better go change," she said uneasily as she realized she had chosen to wear her former House colors as she looked down at her gold wrap.

"Are you kidding? You look great, Hermione," the young man said smiling as he squeezed her hands reassuringly. "You'd even make *me* have a non-gay moment."

Hermione tried to pull out of his grip. He smiled at her again. He raised her chin with his finger. "Really Hermione, you look beautiful. If Draco is going to choose Celeste over you, well, he's going to have to see what he's going to be missing."

Lois tugged gently at Hermione's ankle length silk dress. The little grey-eyed young lady smiled up at her mother.

“Two beautiful Grangers,” Jon said, holding the make shift gift basket as he took Hermione by the hand and handed her the envelope. She tapped her purse making sure the thin stick was there; just in case. She took a deep breath before she nodded. She pulled Lois up into her arms as the two adults took hold of the envelope at the same time.

O-O-O

12 Jun. Sat. 18:30 (6:30 p.m.) BST

A flash of light and a tugging of their navels occurred. The spinning finally stopped. The three found themselves in front of a very large and spanning mansion.

“Are you all right?” Hermione asked Jon.

“Yeah, I forgot how that felt,” Jon said dusting himself off unnecessarily. “You two okay?”

The two Grangers nodded. They all turned to the doorway as a beautiful older witch appeared.

“Hermione,” the older witch took the brown haired witch into her arms. “Welcome home.”

Hermione was speechless for a moment as she tried to blink back tears. “Mrs. Malfoy,” she was finally able to get out.

Mrs. Malfoy held her at arms length so she could look at her. She raised an eyebrow, “Hermione.”

Hermione gave her a weak smile. “Mum, I’d like you to meet a good friend of mine. Jonathan Diego. He teaches English at the school I teach in Hawaii,” Hermione said as Jon shook Mrs. Malfoy’s hand. Lois slipped her small hand into Hermione’s as the little girl looked up at the elder witch.

Hermione picked up the small child. She looked from her to the expectant older witch. “Mum, I,” she said as a tear slipped down her cheek. She paused for a moment to compose herself, “I’d like you to meet Lois.”

Mrs. Malfoy held both of her arms out to the child. Without a thought and to Hermione’s slight surprise the young girl went into her grandmother’s embrace. “Grandma,” the little girl said.

It was the older witch’s turn to shed tears. Hermione couldn’t stop from shedding more tears either. Jon felt a little uncomfortable until Mrs. Malfoy got a hold of herself. She looked from her granddaughter to Hermione.

“Well, we’d better get to the backyard. Everybody’s been waiting,” Mrs. Malfoy said smiling as she led the guests into the foyer.

“I got Draco,” Hermione began, “Draco and Celeste a gift basket; Hawaii products. Draco likes the coffee. I’m sure she will, too.”

Mrs. Malfoy smiled as she waved them forward, allowing the two year old to walk on her own. They walked towards the mountain of wedding gifts. Hermione placed her gift basket at the edge of the pile. Jon ushered her towards Mrs. Malfoy. They continued.

Five minutes earlier

"Here," Draco said as they entered Malfoy manor. He handed Dean a cigar. Dean was all smiles. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had already led Ginny and the newborn past the wedding presents.

"You're very lucky, Dean," Draco smiled at his best friend. "You'll get to watch your daughter grow up to be an amazing young witch."

Dean smiled at him, "Thanks, Draco."

"Draco, Dean," Mr. Malfoy entered the foyer. "Dean, why don't you join the other guests? I'd like to speak with my son."

Draco grew pale. What did his father mean by the other guests? Mr. Malfoy put his arm around his son and ushered him into his den.

Lucius shut the door behind the two of them. "What did you mean, Father, about the other guests?" the younger wizard asked looking into the same steely eyes.

"Of course," Mr. Malfoy crossed his arms. "I said there would be a ceremony today, didn't I?"

Draco looked down. "Of course," the younger wizard sounded crestfallen. "You've finally come to your senses then."

"A Malfoy always does find his composure, Son. Now pull yourself together, Draco. Straighten your robes. Your bride is waiting."

Draco gritted his teeth. But he also knew there was no way out. Maybe Mr. Profesi had struck a deal with his father. The idea of spending the rest of his life with a witch that was just as pompous as he used to be almost made him retch. He swallowed the bile that was at the back of his throat.

Draco straightened his robes as his father "suggested." He ran his fingers through his hair. He looked straight at his father keeping his chin up before walking past him as he headed towards the backyard.

Chapter 34

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews. Only a few more chapters left. Sorry for the cliffhangers => and sorry so short.

Father Norris Today

The red and orange hues of the setting summer sun painted the clear sky of the backyard. It was a nice evening, quite cool. The Wizing lights had just turned on within the past fifteen minutes. There was a slight murmur through the restless crowd.

“Ginny,” Hermione said as she stepped out onto the patio deck. The ginger haired woman hugged her former Gryffindor housemate.

“You made it,” the younger woman said. Hermione nodded.

Hermione looked at her friend, a little concerned. “What happened?” she asked looking down at her friend’s abdomen.

“Wizing labor. Hospital stays aren’t as long and laborious,” the younger Gryffindor smiled. “Ronda’s with Mum and Dad.”

Hermione gave her friend another hug. Hermione felt a gentle tug on her dress. “Ginny, Dean, I’d like you to meet some people.”

She picked up her daughter. “This is a good friend of mine from work, Jonathan Diego. He’s an English teacher. And this young lady,” she said as Ginny and Dean shook hands with Jon, “is Lois, my daughter.”

“Nice to meet you,” the two year old said waving at the young couple.

“It’s nice to meet you, too, young lady,” Dean said as Mrs. Malfoy joined the younger adults.

“I hate to break up this lovely reunion, but we should take our places,” she said as she saw her son walk out onto the patio.

The blonde wizard stopped in his tracks as he saw Hermione. His father walked past him. Mrs. Malfoy smiled. “Jon, I’ll escort you and Lois down to a table.”

Jon canted his eyebrows at Hermione. He shrugged as Hermione allowed him to take Lois. Hermione was about to follow her close friend.

“Ms. Hermione,” Mr. Malfoy said calmly as Hermione halted in her tracks, “Glad that you could make it. Remain up here please.”

“Draco,” he said nodding to his son as the younger wizard finally reached his ex-wife’s side. Mr. Malfoy nodded at the older gentleman who had headed the earlier ceremony. “Father Norris.”

“Thank you, Lucius,” the Ministry official nodded as the older platinum blonde took his place amongst the audience.

“Mr. Norris?” Hermione looked confused.

“Father Norris, today, Hermione,” the head of Family Services nodded at the once mismatched couple. “Draco, shall we get started?”

“May I have the audience rise, please,” Father Norris asked the three thousand guests that were left.

“Do you know what’s going on?” Draco asked Hermione in a whisper as the guests behind them pushed their chairs back as they all began to stand.

Hermione shut her eyes for a moment. She turned and looked into his grey eyes, “I guess your father wanted to humiliate me one last time.”

“I’m so sorry, Hermione,” he looked sad.

She took in a deep breath, still looking into his face. “Draco,” she began, a little choked. “I really *do* wish you and Celeste all the happiness in the world.”

3

Chapter 35

A.N. That last chapter was a filler while i was editing this one . . . sorry =) Things should flow now. thanks again for the reviews.

The Wedding of the Century Version 2.0 Upgrade

The sky seemed to take on deeper shades of orange and red as the sun curved closer to the horizon. It was as if the gates of hell swung open. Draco's world seemed to be crumbling around him. What kind of sick plan had his father cooked up to embarrass her? Draco shut his eyes. Hermione watched as a tear rolled down his cheek.

Father Norris waited until the crowd gave the couple their full attention. He smiled at the anxious couple. Dean and Ginny exchanged smiles behind them. Father Norris finally addressed the crowd.

"We're gathered here today to witness two people reaffirm their love and commitment to each other," the smallish Ministry official began. Hermione kept her head bowed, allowing tears to drop onto her fingers, wetting the thin gold band. Draco looked past Mr. Norris blankly.

"Draco," Father Norris said clearing his throat to get the groom's attention. Draco looked up to see the bespectacled old man smiling at him. "Please take your wife's hands into yours."

Draco's face torqued with confusion. "Mr. . . I mean Father Norris," Draco said as he sneaked a glance at Hermione who mirrored the same stare that he had moments ago, looking past the Ministry official. He continued softly, "Celeste . . . I don't . . . she's not here yet."

Father Norris laughed a little. There was a spattering of nervous laughter from the crowd. "Draco," Father Norris continued. "Please take Hermione's hands into yours."

Draco and Hermione turned to each other wide-eyed. Draco turned to look at Dean who gave him a grin and then behind him to where his parents were standing. He turned back to Father Norris and whispered, "Does my father know about this?"

The presiding official laughed again, joined by some of the guests who were close enough to hear Draco's comments. The older Wizard looked at the couple again, "For two of the brightest Wizarding folk to ever graduate from Hogwarts, you both can be very thick sometimes. This was his idea."

With that even Hermione and Draco nervously laughed. Draco turned to Hermione and gently took her hands into his. They looked into each other's eyes, synchronizing their deep breaths.

"Now, as I was saying," Father Norris was again addressing the crowd. "We are gathered here today to witness these two young people reaffirm their wedding vows as they celebrate their third year third month wedding anniversary."

“Hermione if you will remove your ring and hand it to Mr. Thomas,” the older wizard gently issued directions.

Hermione breathed in as she looked into Draco’s grey eyes. She gingerly pulled off her Muggle wedding band and took another breath. She looked at the best man and smiled as she placed the ring into his palm.

“Now Draco, if you would do the same and hand it to Mrs. Thomas,” Father Norris instructed.

Draco looked into Hermione’s eyes. He felt his breath hitch in his chest for a moment. He turned to face Father Norris. “Father Norris, I . . .” he began and then in a defeated voice, “Sir, it disappeared after I signed the . . . after the divorce papers were signed.”

Father Norris only smiled. He nodded at Draco. Draco loosened his bowtie and unbuttoned the two top buttons of his shirt. He took in a deep breath as he pulled the chain out. The round gold ring twirled. Hermione blinked back tears.

Draco clumsily worked the clasp open. The chain slipped down his chest. Hermione caught it easily as if she were a former Quidditch seeker. Draco smiled at her. She placed the necklace into his palm. He pulled the ring off and shoved the necklace into his trouser pocket.

He held up the ring and shrugged at Hermione. He looked at Father Norris, who smiled and nodded towards Ginny. Draco gave the wedding band to the Matron of Honor. He took Hermione’s hands into his as he looked into her eyes.

“Draco, please repeat after me,” Father Norris said. “I, Draco, take thee, Hermione, to be my lawfully wedded wife, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, to have and to hold from this day forward.”

Draco repeated after the Ministry official, not once lifting his gaze from Hermione. Father Norris directed Hermione to repeat after him. She did the same, also not lifting her gaze from Draco.

“Now, Draco,” Father Norris began. He nodded to the young wizard, “Accept the ring from Mr. Thomas and place it on your wife’s finger.”

“With this ring I thee wed,” Draco repeated after the old wizard as he replaced the Muggle wedding ring on her finger. He smiled at her as he saw a tear roll down her cheek.

“Hermione,” Father Norris nodded at her. She accepted the Wizarding band from Ginny. She looked up into Draco’s eyes. Her fingers shook as she placed the ring on his left ring finger. “With this ring, I thee wed.”

Draco smiled at her. He squeezed her hands gently, keeping them in his own. The newly re-wed couple both took a breath as they turned to face Father Norris. The older wizard smiled to himself. He made a note after the earlier ceremony to make sure he would ask that fairly innocent question closer to the end of the current ceremony after the couple actually exchanged rings.

“Now, if there’s anyone who feels that these two young people should not be together,” he paused looking in the direction of Mr. Malfoy. The crowd laughed collectively. Father Norris, himself, chuckled before he continued. “Speak now or forever hold your peace.”

Draco smiled at Hermione. He touched her face. Hermione closed her eyes for a moment. She looked up at him and mouthed the words, 'I love you.' Draco pulled her into his chest and kissed her.

"Okay, we're not at that part of the ceremony yet, Draco," Father Norris said calmly, "Hermione."

The crowd again began to laugh and applaud. Father Norris threw his hands up in the air with mock exasperation. He smiled at the couple who were still kissing. "With the power vested in me by the Ministry of Magic, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may continue to kiss each other."

The audience went wild. Draco and Hermione finally broke the kiss. She blushed as she heard the crowd applaud. They both looked at Father Norris.

"I present to you Mr. Draco and Mrs. Hermione Malfoy," Father Norris said to the guests. Another cheer rang out from the guests.

"Now, if you will, Draco, Hermione, find your seats. I think the guests are a bit on the hungry side," Father Norris said in jest.

The young couple smiled at him. Draco led Hermione to the head table. Mr. Malfoy nodded at his son and waved his wand. There were 'oohs' and 'ahhs' from the guests as they began to tuck into their dinner.

Draco placed his left hand over Hermione's right hand. She interlaced her fingers with his. She smiled at him.

"Did you have anything to eat at all?" Draco leaned into her.

"No. We were kind of interrupted at breakfast with an invitation we couldn't refuse," she smiled at him. She kissed his cheek.

Draco turned to Dean and Ginny and said, "Did you guys know about this?"

"Yeah," Ginny said grinning as she took a bite of her salad.

"When? How?" Draco asked.

"Your father owed us at the hospital," Dean said.

"Where was I?" Draco asked.

"Looking for cigars," Dean said. They all laughed as they, too, tucked into their dinners.

Chapter 36

First dance

“It’s that time of the festivities when the ‘newlyweds’,” Dean mimed the quotation symbols as he smiled ruefully at the couple, “get to dance their first dance as a couple . . . who is celebrating their third year third month wedding anniversary.”

With that, the guests cheered. The band played a slow number. Draco stood up and extended his hand toward the brown haired witch. Hermione slightly colored as she took his hand. He led her to the dance floor and pulled her in close to him.

He breathed her in as they looked into each other’s eyes. He smiled at her. She blushed again.

“Dean’s sort of right,” she said, looking up at him. “This is our first dance ever as a couple, period.

“I mean,” she continued, as Draco kept her moving in time with him, not once taking his eyes off her. “It’s not like we danced at our first wedding.”

Draco looked at her sincerely. Then he leaned into her cheek as he spun her around. “That’s not true,” he whispered in her ear.

He grinned as he looked into her face. She eyed him suspiciously, as she returned his grin.

“Graduation Ball,” Draco finally said.

Hermione laughed, “We weren’t a couple, Draco.”

“Yes, we were,” Draco smiled. “We were the Heads.”

“We were forced to dance that first number together,” she said as she pulled in closer to his chest.

“Now if my memory serves me correctly,” Draco said, turning them again. “We danced the next two numbers together. I guess you fell prey to my charms then, too. I mean, it’s not like someone held a wand to your head.”

Hermione was speechless for a moment as she remembered what had occurred almost twelve years ago. She raised her eyebrows, “Stop being a prat, Draco.”

“Oh, come on, Hermione. Why didn’t you just slap me in the face and walk away after that first number?” he asked smirking.

“I’d like to slap that smirk off your face right now,” she joked.

“Another Draco-Hermione heated argument,” he said placing his finger under her chin.

“So what can we do to shut us,” Hermione began.

Draco captured her lips. She slowly let his tongue into her mouth allowing him to explore her more deeply. They held that kiss for what seemed like an eternity.

Draco finally broke the kiss so that they could both breathe. Hermione looked up and laughed a little, “That worked.”

They both laughed. Draco felt as if there were no one else on the dance floor even though the guests began to fill the space around them as the music played. He looked into her face again.

“You were beautiful back then,” he said looking into her dark brown eyes as he cradled her chin. “You’re more beautiful now.”

She blushed. She gently patted his chest. Draco took in a quick breath. It was his turn to color slightly.

“You don’t have to flatter me, Draco,” she said. “We’re already married, remember.”

“Well, if you consider the truth flattery, then so be it,” he smiled nuzzling her neck.

Her breath caught in her throat, “I bet you say that to all the witches you’ve been with.”

He looked down into her face. He kissed her forehead before looking at her again. “There’s only one woman for whom I really meant that statement and she’s staring me in the face right now.”

Hermione smiled at him. She leaned her cheek on his chest as the music kept on.

“May I have this dance, Ms. Granger,” Lucius Malfoy asked.

The brown haired youngster looked from her uncle Jon to her grandmother. They both nodded for her to take Mr. Malfoy’s hand. The two year old took her grandfather’s hand. Lucius pulled her up into his arms before leading her onto the dance floor.

Grandpa Lucius couldn’t stop a tear from rolling down his cheek. Lois took a gentle hold of the older Malfoy’s face. With her small palm, she wiped her grandfather’s cheeks. “Don’t cry, Grandpa,” the small child looked into the same grey eyes.

Lucius smiled widely, “Oh, Kiddo.”

“Grandpa,” the little child looked expectantly up at him. “Are you happy about Mom and Dad?”

The older Malfoy turned them on the dance floor. “I’m very happy.”

“Even if Mom’s a Muggle-born?”

“Your mum is an amazing witch just as you are an amazing young girl,” the older man said, cupping her chin.

“Do you hate me, Grandpa?”

“No, why would I? Did your mother say I would?” he looked into the child’s eyes.

The young girl shook her head, “No. She said you would love me no matter what.”

“Well, she’s right. I don’t ever want you to think that I could ever hate you,” Lucius hugged the young girl. “You see, there are witches and wizards who thought that they were better than others.”

“Because they weren’t,” the young girl hesitated, “they weren’t Muggle-borns.”

“Exactly. And shamefully, I was one of them,” Lucius looked into her grey eyes. “Not anymore.”

The young girl wrapped her arms around her grandfather’s neck and hugged him for a long time. Mr. Malfoy looked up to the stars smiling.

“May I,” Draco said, sounding a bit vexed as he extended his hand towards the couple dancing.

The young wizard reluctantly gave up his dance partner. Hermione smiled to herself. “I thought you’d never cut in, Draco,” she said looking into his grey eyes.

“I’d had to bite my tongue six times to keep from saying ‘no’ to these vultures. I don’t want to let you out of my grasp for the rest of the night,” Draco said clutching her closer. “I swear if another wizard tries to cut in, I’m gonna hex . . .”

“May we cut in,” the elder Malfoy tapped Draco’s shoulder.

“Dad,” Draco sounded surprised. “I mean, Father.”

“Draco,” Lucius Malfoy held his granddaughter in his arms. “A father should get the chance to dance with his daughter on such an occasion.”

Draco looked at Hermione. Hermione nodded. Draco stretched his arms out towards the small child.

Lois crawled into the blonde wizard’s grasp. Draco smiled at the girl and then back at her mother. He whisked the little child away.

Hermione smiled to herself. She was just about to vacate the dance floor when Lucius Malfoy held out his hand. Hermione took in a breath.

“Ms. Hermione,” the older Malfoy began. “May I have this dance?”

Hermione took in a sharp breath. “Of course, Sir,” she said, hesitating at first before taking her father-in-law’s hands.

Lucius turned her onto the dance floor. Hermione was a little rattled when Lucius smiled at her.

“Draco has taken dance lessons since way before Hogwarts. You kept up with him beautifully,” the older wizard complimented.

Hermione could not keep from blushing, “I’m a closet ballroom dancer, Mr. Malfoy.”

“You dance in closets?” Mr. Malfoy asked sincerely.

They both laughed. “It’s a Muggle saying, Mr. Malfoy,” the brown haired witch smiled at her father-in-law. “I dance a lot better in the confines of my own home; without several thousand guests watching.”

“I guess I’ll have to brush up on my Muggle Studies,” Lucius said smiling genuinely at her. He took in a deep breath.

“Three years ago, I don’t think I could’ve ever imagined my son accepting his responsibilities like he is now.”

Hermione almost stopped dancing. She looked down for a moment trying to hide eyes that were beginning to gloss over. She looked up into familiar grey eyes.

“Mr. Malfoy,” she hesitated, “I know I’ve never been your first choice for Draco.

“I know I’m never going to be good enough for him,” Hermione looked down.

“Hermione,” Lucius said. He raised her chin up so that he could see her face. “I was wrong about you.”

Hermione looked up into his face. She saw a softness in his eyes; not unlike that which she saw in Draco’s. She gulped.

“I’ve made your life a living hell from the beginning,” he said sadly.

“Mr. Malfoy,” she began.

“I’ve killed your friends and family,” Mr. Malfoy stopped dancing but kept her in his arms.

“Mr. Malfoy, you didn’t kill Ron or Harry,” Hermione said. “It was the war.”

“Your parents,” Lucius said disheartened.

“Corey Reimers was head of that mission,” Hermione pointed out.

“I may as well have been the one to have done all those things. I was a high ranking Death Eater,” the older Malfoy acknowledged.

“But you didn’t, Sir,” Hermione said.

“I didn’t stop them from happening, either. I didn’t stop Draco from hurting you.”

“Everything’s fair in love and war, Mr. Malfoy.”

“How can you be so forgiving?”

“My parents always taught me to see the good in people,” she began. “With Draco, it was a little difficult.”

Both of them began to laugh. Mr. Malfoy continued to lead her on the dance floor.

“They also taught me that if you really love someone, you could forgive him anything.”

Lucius smiled. “Hermione,” he said looking into her face. “I know it’s going to take a long time for you to feel comfortable enough to call me Father, let alone, Dad. I know I probably

could never live up to your own father. I'm going to have to earn your respect. I just want you to know that I'm glad Draco chose you.

"Welcome back to the family, Hermione," the older wizard said expectantly.

Hermione closed her eyes, unsuccessfully blinking back tears. "Thanks, Dad," she cried.

Lucius Malfoy brought her into an embrace. He, too, could not stop from shedding tears. He pushed her gently away, after a while, so that he could look into her face. They both took a breath.

"I've missed the first two years of my granddaughter's life," he began with a smile. "A present a day for the next two years should probably suffice."

"Dad, I don't think so," Hermione said a little softly.

"You're right," Mr. Malfoy said, laughing as he dipped her. "We probably don't want anymore Dracos running around."

"Okay, I thought I heard mention of my name," Draco said as he appeared next to his father, "May I have my wife back, Dad?"

The elder Malfoy looked at his daughter-in-law with raised eyebrows. She laughed. The older wizard bowed to the young couple.

Draco graciously nodded at his father before taking Hermione's hand. He drew her in close to him immediately after his father left heading towards Mrs. Malfoy, Lois, and Jon.

"You look gorgeous," he whispered into her ear.

"You've said that already," she said breathlessly.

"No, I said you looked beautiful earlier," he said looking into her eyes.

"You're such a prat, you know that," she said smiling up at him. He smiled back, bringing her closer to his chest. She blushed. "I love you, Mr. Malfoy."

"I love you more, Mrs. Malfoy," he said, as he moved his lips over hers.

12

A.N. Okay, 2 more chapters to finish up. Thanks for all the reviews so far.

Chapter 37

A.N. Thanks for all the reviews. Almost finished.

Wedding Night — II 12/6

12 Jun. Sat. 2245 (10:45 p.m.) BST

They made sure to thank every single guest for staying before each one had left. The night turned out quite beautifully. The guests danced, ate, and drank. They talked and caught up on old times. The last guests left at around a quarter of eleven and that's because Ginny was quite tired; after all she had given birth earlier that morning.

Draco and Hermione waved as the last couple left Malfoy Manor. Draco's mother and father had already entered the house a half hour ago to put Lois to bed. Jon had retired earlier that evening, flooring home.

Draco took Hermione's hand and placed it on his chest as he breathed in. Hermione leaned into her husband's chest and lay her head there for a moment.

Draco kissed the top of her head, "Should we go check on Lois before we turn in?"

She looked up at him. She kissed his cheek. She nodded.

Hand in hand, they entered the manor. "Where is our daughter, Draco?" she half joked as she smiled up at him.

"I think she's in my old nursery. That room right at the top of the stairs," he said as he pointed to the dimly lit room. "It's the closest room in my wing to their side of the manor."

They reached the top of the stairs. They peeked into the room. They saw the little girl curled up under the covers of the short bed. Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy sat on the floor just watching her sleep.

The young couple looked at each other. Draco shrugged his shoulders as he led Hermione further into the large nursery.

"Um, Mum, Dad," the 'new' bride began. "She's a pretty still sleeper. You don't have to worry about her falling off the bed."

Mrs. Malfoy looked up at her daughter-in-law. "I know dear," she smiled. She ruffled Mr. Malfoy's blonde locks, "Mr. Malfoy never really got a chance to witness the small things during Draco's childhood."

Hermione smiled at Draco who rolled his eyes. "Well, goodnight, Mum, Dad," Draco said as he led Hermione out into the hallway and towards the master bedroom in the west wing.

Mrs. Malfoy kissed Mr. Malfoy on the cheek as she leaned into his body. Mr. Malfoy pulled her into his chest and kissed her forehead as they both watched the small child breathe in and out, as she slumbered.

“Wait,” Draco said as he stopped her from entering their room. He held his arms out.

She looked up at him questioningly. “What?” she asked with a smile.

“I learned this from Dean,” he said as he swept her up into his arms.

“Whoa,” she said smiling at him.

“I’m supposed to carry you over the threshold,” he said kissing her cheek as he walked with her into the room. He gently placed her on her feet.

It was as if her legs turned to jelly for a moment. He caught her in his arms. He kissed her bare shoulder. She took in a breath. He looked into her eyes. He touched her cheek as he noticed her eyes brimmed with moisture.

“What’s wrong?” he asked wiping away a tear that escaped. She shook her head and then took another breath.

“I’m just,” she began. She placed her hand over his, “I’m just afraid that the clock will strike twelve on me and all of this will be just a dream.”

“If it’s a dream,” he began as he started kissing her neck. He felt her take in a sharp breath. “I don’t want to ever wake up.”

“I love you, Draco,” she said as her hands began to undress him. It was his turn to take a breath.

It took every ounce of self-control for him not to tear off her crimson garb, right then and there. He ran his fingers down her back and he heard her take in a sharp breath. He undid her zipper and then looked into her eyes. The dress pooled at her feet exposing her naked upper body. He smiled at her as she began to flush. She mirrored Draco’s top half as she had unbuttoned his shirt and it too lay at their feet.

He pulled her towards the bed. He canted his eyebrow as he landed on it after she had pushed him down. He smiled as he grabbed onto her waist. He pulled her onto her back. He looked down at her as she lay beneath him.

He gently removed the rest of her clothing as he watched her take deep breaths to control herself. Her eyelids fluttered.

He undressed completely. She felt the bed dip as he placed his knee in between her thighs. He kissed up from her navel, taking in one nipple and then the other. He smirked to himself as she arched her back letting out an exhaled breath through pursed lips.

“I love you, Hermione,” he said, hearing her moan as he ran his hand up her thigh and over her entrance.

“Please, Draco,” she said begging him, as she ran her hand over his buttocks.

Draco would need no more prodding. She spread her legs wider allowing him to move in closer. He threw foreplay out the window and buried himself into her up to the hilt. She moaned his name and that sent him over the top. She wrapped her lower legs around his thighs as he pumped into her. She kept up with his rhythm. She pulled on his neck bringing

his face closer to hers. He smirked before leaning in to kiss her, never once stopping his thrusts.

They made love over, and over again disregarding the fact that it had started as a very anxious day for the both of them. Draco had collapsed on her. She kissed his neck. He whispered that he loved her and she whispered a similar reply.

He gently rolled off her and lay next to her holding her in his arms. She blinked sleepily up at him before moving in closer. He pulled her onto his chest. She rested her head on him before succumbing to sleep. He took a peek at the old birthday present. He yawned as the hands read a quarter to three. He turned his attention back to her. Draco, not unlike Mr. Malfoy, watched someone he really cared about sleep. He smiled to himself as he kissed her forehead before he too couldn't keep his eyes open.

6

FIN

A.N. Okay, aqui esta. The last chapter. enjoy!

The Morning After — II

13 Jun. Sun. 0700 (7:00 a.m.) BST

Hermione stretched out of her slumber. She felt the silk sheets under her and then quickly blinked. She had almost forgotten where she was. She sat up, forgetting that she had nothing on under the covers. She looked at the empty bed as she pulled the silk sheet up to her chin. She breathed in.

She took a full minute to get her bearings straight. She wrapped the green soft fabric around her upper torso. She took a deep breath as she turned towards the balcony. The thin white curtain waved in the slight morning breeze.

She walked slowly towards the curtain and saw the back of the young man gazing at the lake. He had on only his dark green pajama bottoms as he leaned against the balcony railing. She quietly joined him at his side.

“Morning,” she said softly as he turned to face her.

He gave her a light peck on the cheek. He breathed in as he touched her face. He wrapped his arm around her waist.

“I know now why you woke up early all those mornings,” he said, taking in another deep breath. They watched the different hues of red and orange light up the sky as the sun rose.

She pointed to the lake. “The sight of the sun’s rays reflecting off of the lake is breathtaking.”

He touched her cheek again as he looked into her eyes. “At least that reason sounded way more pleasant than the obvious one.”

She moved a strand of his hair out of his face as she studied him. She gulped.

“Hermione, I hurt you countless number of times when we were together,” he said as a tear rolled down his cheek. Hermione took a deep breath as she saw this.

“It’s okay, Draco,” she said shrugging her shoulders.

“It’s not okay,” he said touching her cheek. He gulped, “Your first time should have been special; with somebody special.”

She shut her eyes as she felt tears start to well up. She blinked as she looked up at him.

“Who were you saving yourself for, Hermione?” he asked her softly as he ran his thumb over her cheek, wiping away a tear.

She laughed before looking back up at him. “I guess you would call me a hopeless romantic,” she said softly. “I was saving myself for my husband on our wedding night.”

"It happened that way," she said, trying to smile at him.

He placed his forehead on hers, breathing in deeply as he looked into her eyes. "I'm so sorry."

She leaned her cheek on his bare chest as she wrapped her arms around his waist. "Everything worked out, Draco," she said, as she felt his chest expand and contract with each breath.

"I love you, Hermione," he said as she looked up at him. He traced her jawline with his forefinger. He turned her chin up. He took in a breath as he looked into deep brown eyes. "Promise me if I ever hurt you or our kids, you'll have me thrown into Azkaban."

Hermione studied his face as she looked into his grey eyes. "I couldn't do that," she said softly, running her fingers over his chest. "I love you too much."

"Besides," she said giving him a smirk that he would've been proud of, "I will cut your thing off . . . using a Muggle scalpel from one of my student lab kits."

He laughed. She joined in after shaking her head at him. He swooped down to capture her lips in a tender kiss.

She looked up adoringly at him after their liplock. "We'd better get ready for the day," she said breathlessly. "Lois will probably wake up in another half hour."

"Mmmm," he said looking at her smiling. 'You can have the shower first,' he said as he led her back into the bedroom. "Or we could stay in bed for the next sixty or seventy years."

She laughed as she kissed him on the cheek before heading toward the bathroom. He watched her close the door behind her. He headed for his closet and grabbed a white t-shirt, a pair of khakis, and then a pair of boxers from his dresser. He breathed in as he took a seat at the edge of the bed.

He looked down at the dark red dress from which she had stepped out the night before. He looked at the bathroom door and then picked up the silk garment. He ran his fingers over the fabric and then looked at the door again. He placed the dress on the dresser.

He smirked as he picked up his wand. He apparated.

He smiled as he watched the lazy stream of water from the shower, which, at the moment, he thanked Merlin that the house elves didn't get a chance to fix yet. The water cascaded down her back. She ran her hand through her hair as the last of the shampoo suds washed away. She turned around, her eyes were closed as she didn't want to get shampoo in her eyes. He watched her breasts heave as she exhaled. She finally opened her eyes.

"Damn it, Draco," she said, shaking her head. Her initial reaction was to cover herself. She narrowed her eyes at him. He took a deep breath and exhaled as he watched her close the distance between them. "That isn't fair, Draco."

"Magic, Hermione," he raised his eyebrows and grinned sheepishly. He took in a sharp breath, as he was surprised, at first, at her bold action.

She had run her hand down his abdomen and then over his increasingly hardening penis. He quickly pulled her in close to his body and kissed her. He felt her hands on the small of his back. He cupped her ass and pulled her up onto his body.

She moaned as he entered her. He pulled up on her thighs, which signaled her to wrap her legs around his waist. He leaned her against the wall of the shower, pausing as he looked into her eyes. She nodded at him.

He trembled for a moment, his knees almost buckling. No witch, not even Celeste, made him feel like Hermione had always done. She was the only person who had ever stood up to him.

“I love you, Draco,” she moaned.

Draco took in a breath and started to thrust into her. She kissed his neck as he pushed deeper into her. They both moaned as they made love, not caring how long they had been in the shower.

Draco kissed the back of Hermione’s neck as the last of the soap rinsed from her body. She turned around and kissed him. “Wow,” she said as she ran her hand over his chest.

“I’ve never done that before,” he said as he pulled her hand from his chest. He kissed her palm.

“Really?” she asked incredulously.

Draco raised his eyebrow in mock astonishment. “What?” he asked, bringing her into his body. He looked deep into her eyes. “I’m not as experienced as you think I am, Hermione.”

She smiled up at him. She tiptoed to kiss his cheek before leaving him to take his turn in the shower. She winked at him. He breathed in as he watched her towel off before wrapping the towel around her body. She smiled and grabbed his wand.

She whispered an incantation that effectively dried and straightened her hair. He watched her exit the bathroom with an exaggerated sway of her hips. He adjusted himself painfully and quickly turned off the hot water as the cold lazy stream of water washed over his body. He pictured her face and breathed in as he soaped up. He smiled to himself again, three years out of practice and she hasn’t missed a beat.

She looked at the dress on the dresser. It might be a bit too formal for breakfast, even here at Malfoy Manor. She turned to look at the closet that she once shared with the blonde wizard that she had just left in the shower.

Surely, he wouldn’t mind her wearing one of his pants and shirts. She opened up the closet and thumbed through his wardrobe. As she reached the back of the closet, she took in a breath. She ran her hand over the beautiful dress robes that Mrs. Malfoy had bought her years ago. She also saw the blue jeans and light green long sleeved shirt she had worn the night

before they had gone down to the Ministry of Magic to “sign” the divorce paperwork. She pulled the jeans off the hanger.

She turned toward the dresser again. “Accio underwear,” she said commandingly. The drawers opened and a bra and knickers came flying at her. ‘Whoa,’ she thought. She quickly put her underwear on and pulled on her jeans. She wasn’t about to use the green shirt; even the summer months in England were rather hot. She opened the bottom drawer of the dresser.

She pulled out the familiar grey t-shirt. She ran her finger over the word Gryffindor.

“I’ve always liked that shirt,” he said fully dressed from the bathroom doorway. He quickly made his way to her. “On or off of you,” he said as he pulled her in close for a kiss. She closed her eyes as she kissed him back.

“You kept all those dress robes,” Hermione said as they finally caught their breaths.

He shrugged his shoulders as he looked into her eyes. She smiled at him as she pulled the old gym shirt on.

“Merlin,” Hermione began, “What would you have told Celeste if she looked in your closet, Draco?”

“I would have told her the truth,” Draco smirked at her. She canted her eyebrow up at him.

“I would have told her that I was a closet cross dresser,” he said almost seriously. She busted out laughing.

“You are incorrigible, you know that?” she said running her hand over his chest.

“Yes, but you love me anyway,” he kissed her neck. She breathed in. He held her in his arms.

“I couldn’t,” he said shaking his head. He looked into her eyes. “I needed them to remind me of you. I couldn’t lose you, again.”

“You could never lose me, Draco,” she said reassuring him. She ran her hand down his arm. She held his hands in hers. He smiled as she touched his Wizarding wedding band. She looked up at him.

“What?” he asked, studying her face.

“It will probably take a month,” she paused looking down at her hands. “But I’m sure my principal will sign transfer papers, Draco.”

“No,” he said shaking his head.

He watched Hermione’s eyes flutter. He touched her cheek. He kissed her softly before looking into her eyes. “When we were first married, you were forced to give up so much.”

Hermione started to protest when Draco placed his finger on her lips. Hermione gulped. Draco continued, “You gave up your job, your Muggle life, basically your freedom.

“I can’t let you do that again,” he said as he rubbed her cheek.

She averted his eyes. “Long distance relationships never work out, Draco,” she said shutting her eyes as she felt tears welling up.

He lifted her chin and took in a breath as he wiped her cheeks, "I know, Hermione."

She blinked back tears as she placed her hands on his. He kissed her again.

"I want to prove wrong that stupid git that said that we would never use what we were learning in Muggle Studies in the real world," he smiled at her.

She laughed remembering that *he* was that stupid git. She looked into his grey eyes.

"I think it's high time I put to use what Professor Serhumano taught us, don't you think. And because you wouldn't let me give up magic for you, this is the next best thing," he said smiling at her. "I'm sure the Ministry will have a position available in Honolulu. Worse comes to worse I can always commute from Hawai'i to here; the wonders of apparition. We'll need to build a fire place, of course."

"You would do that for me?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"I would do it for us, Hermione," he said squeezing her hands, "You, me, Lois."

She hugged him. Draco held her in his arms for quite some time. They finally broke their embrace.

"We should go check on Lois," Hermione said breathlessly.

"Yeah," Draco said taking a hold of her hand as he led her out of the room.

"Are you sure about this, Draco, moving to Hawaii?" she asked hesitantly. "You'd have to get used to some Muggle ways."

"Like the little shower incident, Hermione, there's always a first time for everything," he smiled at her as they walked down the hallway. She pulled in close to his chest.

"I'll have to go back home for a little while today."

"What for?" he asked rubbing her back.

"To pick up some clothes for this vacation period," she said running her hand over his chest.

"I'll come with you. I don't think Mum and Dad would mind watching Lois, do you?"

Hermione paused in front of the door to the library. She turned to Draco. He smiled as he opened the door to her favorite room of the manor. She breathed in the smell of the leather bindings of the books. She looked around the room from the entranceway.

She turned to her husband and smiled. She leaned her head on his chest. Then she noticed something different. "What happened to the rug?"

He took in a breath. "I... had to get rid of it," he said hesitantly.

She looked at him with raised eyebrows. He shrugged again.

"Let's just say it's got something to do with Celeste," he began as he watched her face flush. "And Reimers."

"Oh," she leaned into his chest. "I really don't want to know about it, do I?"

He shook his head smiling. He kissed her before leading her out back into the hall.

"We should go check on Lois," Hermione said as they headed toward the end of the hall.

"I need to thank her one day," Draco began as he snaked his arm around her waist.

"For what?" she asked looking up at him.

"For breaking your computer," he said kissing her forehead. They both laughed.

"So how much sleep do you think Mum and Dad got?" Hermione asked playfully as they got closer to the nursery.

"Not much," he said smiling. "They'll probably be sleeping in today."

They turned into the nursery. They were surprised to see Lois awake, cross-legged, and watching her grandparents sleep.

"Shhh," she said softly.

Both Hermione and Draco smiled. Mr. Malfoy sat on the floor next to the small bed. His head rested on his arm. Mrs. Malfoy lay on the floor with her head in her husband's lap.

Draco went around the two sleeping adults and stretched his arms out. Lois crawled into them. "Good morning, Daddy," she whispered.

Draco kissed the child's forehead. "Good morning to you, too, Kiddo."

Hermione kissed the child on her cheek. Lois smiled at the both of them.

"Hungry?" Draco asked the toddler.

"Mhmm," she said nodding her head.

"How 'bout some breakfast then?"

"Save me a pancake," Mrs. Malfoy said as she stirred.

Draco and Hermione laughed softly. "Morning, Mum," Hermione said. "Sorry we woke you."

"No trouble at all," she said as she sat up. She kissed her husband on the cheek as he stirred.

Mr. Malfoy, with his eyes closed ran his arms over the bed and quickly stood up. The young couple watched him wide-eyed.

"Did she fall off the bed?" The older Malfoy asked worriedly.

Everybody laughed. "Morning, Dad," Draco said as Mr. Malfoy blinked away sleep.

"Morning, Grandpa," the little girl said smiling.

Mr. Malfoy smiled back. Mrs. Malfoy put her arm around his waist and patted his chest. "I think it's time for breakfast don't you all think."

Everybody nodded. They all smiled at each other before they headed downstairs for breakfast; Draco carrying Lois on his hip while holding onto Hermione's hand, followed by

Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy walking hand in hand, too.

Mr. Malfoy watched the young family and took in a breath. Mrs. Malfoy stopped walking. Mr. Malfoy looked at his wife endearingly. She leaned into him and whispered, "I told you everything would turn out fine."

He pulled her in closely and kissed her. He would never again doubt his lovely wife.

FIN

A.N. Thank you all for taking the time out to read and review over the past several months.

P.S. Sequel is The Profesi Reprisal.